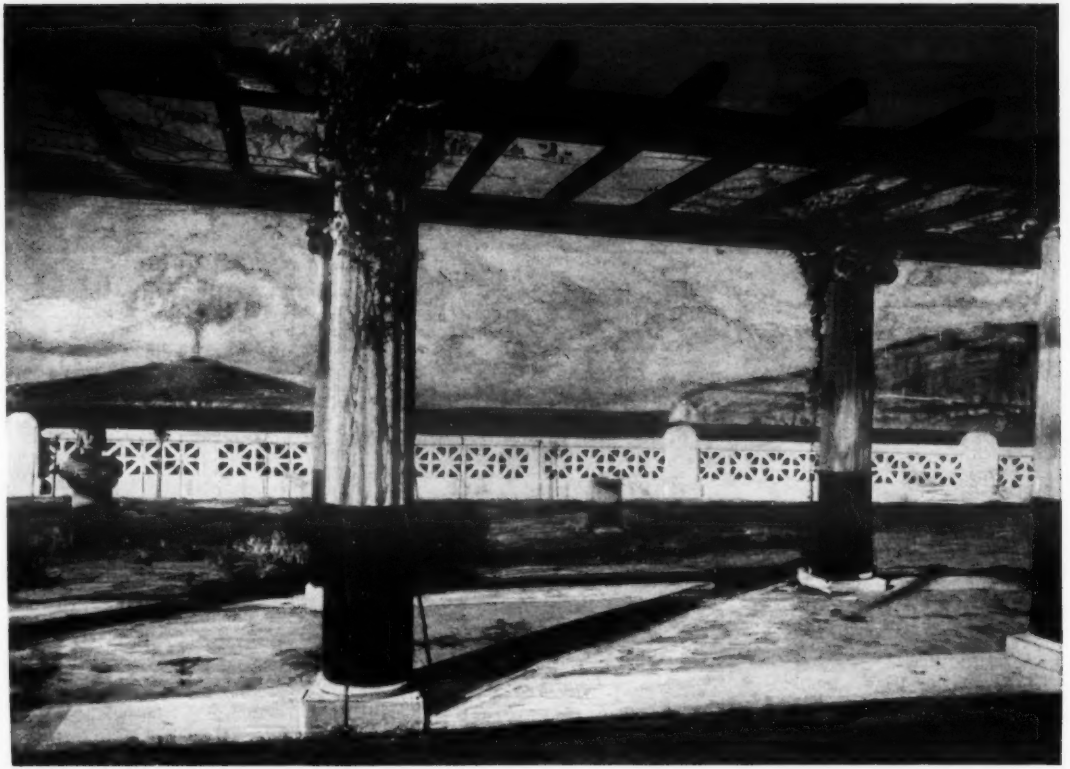
PALL MALL

CEMBER 1911

40 PAGES
TORIES & PICTURES



PALL MALL MAGAZINE.

IN HORTENSIA'S GARDEN.

THE PALL MALL MAGAZINE

Christmas Double Number.

DECEMBER, 1911.

FROM THE SILENT RIVER.

BY WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR.

I.

IN the brief revival of classical archæology at Naples which marked the reign of Murat it did not escape those who busied themselves with Pompeii and Herculaneum that many points of the bay, such as Bagnoli, Stabiae and Vico, gave indication of buried Roman houses. At Sorrento in 1830, while laying the foundations of a hotel, part of a villa was laid bare and wholly destroyed, its more important portion being under an adjacent monastery.

A few years ago, when Professor Vaini's villa passed to me, I removed that disused monastery and came upon an ancient construction. It was easy to trace the familiar outline—peristyle, atrium, tablinium or parlour, a cubiculum which had been the porter's lodge, and a flight of stone steps leading down to the dining-room, kitchen and wine cellar. The rear part, which must have included the bedrooms, had been obliterated in building the hotel. The house thus exposed had once been a large and luxurious residence that, left to a state of abandonment, had become filled with its own débris. There were indications of an upper wooden story which had perished by fire, and its destruction was perhaps at the close of the first century of our era. Its excavation, which covered twenty-one months, was confided to an expert, and conducted under my own supervision.

The marble pavement was nearly intact, and the walls were so well preserved in soft earth that in places the original colour and decoration remained. The colonnade was almost complete, only a few pillars having split and disintegrated, and half a dozen capitals fallen. Roofs, rafters and ceilings had totally perished. At the entrance, in black and white mosaic, is the inscription :

HOSPES PULSANTI TIBI
SE MEA JANUA PANDET

"Stranger, if you knock, my door will be opened to you"—a more genial salutation than the well-known *Cave Canem* of Pompeii. In two places on the walls are graffiti painted on the stucco, perhaps by the owner's hand ; one being verses

of the Ode addressed by Horace to Dellius, and the other an apparently original composition of poetical character. In the wine cellar is a verse scratched in faulty Latin, the jest of a slave, the sense of which is as follows :

Two white, startled nymphs dashed away to the river,
Mid shouts of a satyr borne o'er the whispering vine,
Down the hillside they fled, leaving their laughter,
Nearer leaped the satyr, cajoling, beseeching, commanding,
A splash—they are gone. Lost in the deeps of the river.
" A plague on all water fowl ! " muttered the satyr.

" Amid several marble ornaments was half a memorial stone six feet high."

On the atrium floor lay a statue of the boy Bacchus which had stood as a fountain at the side of the impluvium, and scattered about were fragments of bronze tables and chairs. It made one's heart leap to watch the excavation, to see

ancient objects brought to light, and to be the first to tread again that classic pavement.

Amid several marble ornaments in the uncovered garden, and close to the monastery wall, was half a memorial stone six feet high. In some bygone age it

TRANSLATION.

To the Silent Tutelar Deity.

A place consecrated to the sainted Hortensia Eunoea; a dear spouse, charming kind and devout, generously furnished with an excellent mind, courteous, sincere, genial and distinguished, well deserving of every good; a worthy lady with whom I, Titus Claudius Florus, have lived a good life for many years. She was rendered free from care on the 11th of October, and was buried during the Consulate of Corellius Vettonianus. By command of her husband this altar was dedicated on the 7th of May.

[*The inscription was reconstructed in its entirety, the conjectural restoration being shown in lighter letters.*]

had been sawn vertically down the middle, the missing half having doubtless served as building material. When the fragment that remained had been placed upright, half an inscription was deciphered, to which I devoted some studious hours. It became evident that herein lay a clue to the story of the house, and

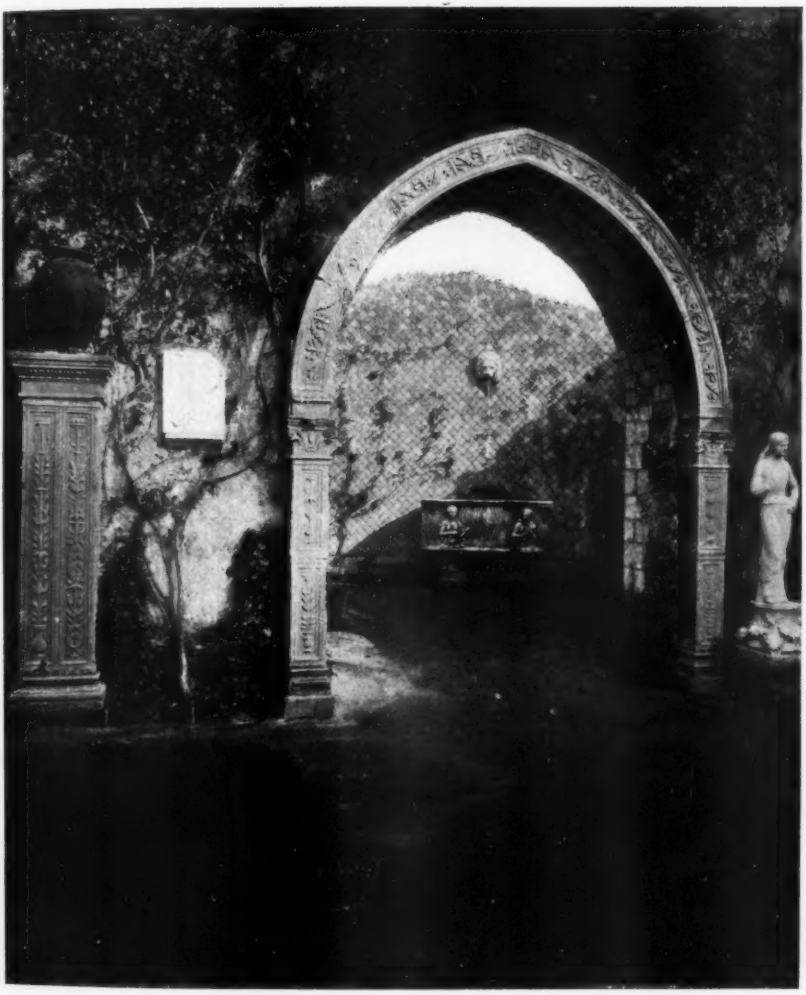
my labour was rewarded as tentatively, phrase by phrase, the inscription was reconstructed in its entirety, the conjectural restoration being shown in lighter letters.

The lower floor of the villa, which had been hewn in rock, and is on one side open to the sea, was easily cleared. When the rubbish which choked its flight of steps had been removed, I entered an ante-chamber and crossed the wine cellar wherein leaned a score of terra cotta wine jars. Beyond was a large dining-room, with arched ceiling and an open balustrade overlooking the Bay of Naples. Beside this triclinium is the kitchen, with ruined stone oven, granite pestle and mortar, and fragments of bronze cooking utensils. I realised that an important discovery had been made, and delighted myself in visiting those silent walls, now reopened to the sky. How wonderful a transition it was to pass at a step from the trim paths of my cloister garden—from the green and silver of its olives, with their calm ascetic shade, and the dismal Christian emblems the monks left there—to a fragment of the golden Surrentum of classic days as fresh in its reappearance as the pressed leaf which after half a century retains something of its pristine brilliance. Even the sunshine seemed to me transfigured to an unusual splendour, remembering how passionately the ancients were heliophile in their love of the sun.

Several times during my researches I heard the voice of a crying child, faint and remote, yet apparently within the excavation. It was a sound of intense anguish, beyond ordinary pain—a wailing of weird significance. I called the nearest workman, and asked who had brought a crying child. After a moment's listening, while the sound died tremulously away, he gave me the conventional reply, *chi lo sà ?* The men working above had heard it, and to them it seemed to come from below. There was no child to be found, and the sound ceased for that day. Chancing to meet the porter of the adjoining hotel, I asked if any of the employees had heard this noise, and he seemed amused as he answered with twinkling eyes of Italian humour: "Surely, Signore, in a rabbit warren (*tana di conegli*) such as Sorrento there are swarms of children, and who gives heed if one should cry ! "

In resuming my examination of the triclinium I raised an amphora or wine vessel that had fallen with its nozzle buried in sand. Like the others, it had originally been sealed with wax, the usual method of preserving wine. I was surprised to find slightly protruding from it a yellow-stained papyrus that, owing to the waterproof character of its receptacle, had escaped destruction. I returned to the Villa Sirena, and, having moistened the paper with a wash of vaseline, flattened it on my work-table and found that it comprised three separate scrolls, one within the other, each covered with tolerably legible writing. I washed these scrolls with a camel's hair brush dipped in hypo sulphuret of ammonia, and dried each quickly with fresh blotting paper. By this process the faded words were rendered decipherable, and my assistant copied out the writing before the brown ink perished from exposure.

It was the work of weeks to make a free translation of the first-century Latin into English. The outer scroll was the writing of Dexter Quintilian, an aedile (magistrate) residing at Vicus, the neighbouring modern Vico Equense ; the next was the work of Hortensia Eunoea, owner of the villa ; the last having been written by Titus Claudius Florus, her widower. They differ in size, quality of paper, handwriting and colour of ink, and form the points of view of three persons as to a homicide of which Florus was suspected. They might be likened to a modern solicitor's packet of documents. Their united version is a plea of "not proven." Their narratives are more a review of the events of several years than a defence against the charge of assassination. Half a dozen years had elapsed when Florus wrote, and if guilty he must have felt the security that lapse of time brings. Dexter Quintilian arrays the facts and evolves from them his friend's justification. The crime is mentioned as having been committed the year after



Looking from the Cloister Garden into the Villa Florus.
The portraits on the Sarcophagus are supposed to be those of Florus and Hortensia.

the destruction of Pompeii, which happened A.D. 79, but it is not until two years later that the suspicion against Florus becomes so acute as to place him in danger of a prosecution, from which he was saved by the favourable report of his friend the aedile who had been sent to investigate. The three letters collectively present a dramatic picture, and the recitals are illumined by curious allusions. Hortensia's description of her infant's death has the sinister accent of biblical tragedy. The killing of her first husband having occurred A.D. 80, her marriage to Florus took place in 81, and if the consulate of Corellius Vettonianus was in 87 (reign of Domitian) Hortensia was aged about forty-five at the time of her death.

In the intensity of their narrative we meet these people living and not dead, and know them intimately for an hour. Their manuscripts may have been secreted in an empty wine jar in the haste of some sudden alarm. It does not appear how the roll came to be in the possession of Florus at his wife's villa, where we find him residing after her death, but if he were still apprehensive, he would naturally preserve at hand this testimony to his innocence. The picture flashed from these scrolls presents the murdered husband Eutychianus, a Greek, surnamed Comazon; Florus, who writes with something like poetic fervour; Hortensia standing wistfully still amid ill-fated days; and their friend, Dexter Quintilian, beneath whose phrase one cannot but perceive that he, too, loved Hortensia.

Quintilian and Florus were tribunes in Judaea, probably serving with the XII. Legion about A.D. 68–69. In the years of siege and sack and slaughter that preceded the taking of Jerusalem they must have witnessed fearful atrocities. In half a dozen years over one million Hebrews perished, many of them prisoners sacrificed to Jupiter and Mars according to custom before the Roman eagles. What wonder if through the centuries those emblems came to be known to the conquered of all nations by some such name of horror as the Master used when speaking of them to his disciples: "The abomination of desolation standing where it ought not."

After reading Hortensia's story I understood the mystery of the child-voice lamentation. It is occasionally heard, always within the ruined walls, yet infinitely remote, always perfectly human albeit thrilling with preternatural distress. But now, since it appears that the wailing of the boy Laetus is as much a part of my excavation as the ocean murmur is inherent to the dead sea-shell, I no longer heed this voice from the silent river.

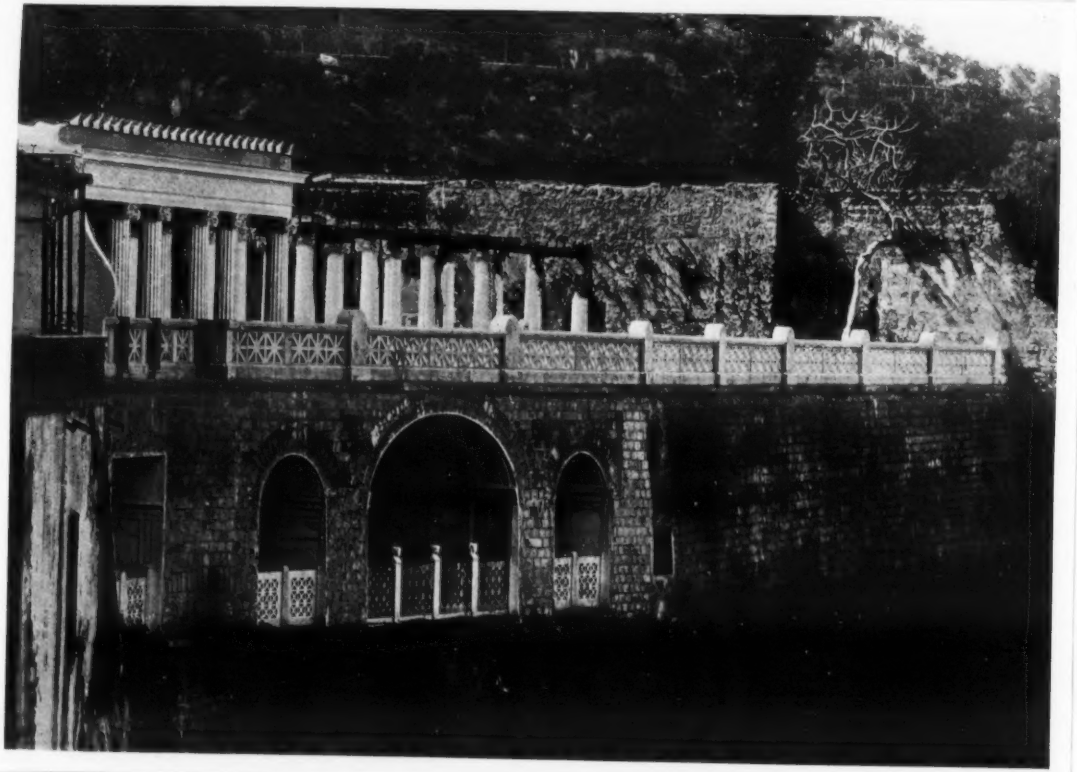
II.

Dexter Quintilian to Hortensia.

Hortensia,—I dip my reed in the brown since you so bid me, knowing it is right you should possess my judgment as magistrate, as well as friend, upon the accusation brought against your husband in this jarring scheme we call life.

The facts present a grave contradiction demanding of a judge that refined intellectual perspective he must borrow for the occasion of the nearest philosopher. There is a probability that at the moment of the crime Florus was miles away; but against it stands his curious aberration which almost assumes the character of self-accusation. No one saw the assassin, and the only motive for the crime that has ever been suggested is offered by the accused's marriage to you less than eight months after your first husband was slain. That a man of Florus' public standing should have placed himself in the power of men hired to commit a crime is unlikely.

In the study of homicide, we begin by reconstructing the tragedy with its *dramatis personæ*, applying our gaze where there is nothing now, only the conjectural something that was. This is the first step toward approaching the heart of the motive that swayed the criminal. We place in symmetrical line the



The entrance connecting Villa Florus with the Cloister Garden.
Ante-Room, Wine Cellar, Triclinium, Kitchen.

circumstances so far as established, and this we call evidence. Only, as all the world knows, evidence sometimes plays the game with loaded dice.

It was in Judaea, campaigning against the Hebrews, that I first met Florus, both of us being tribunes in the same Legion. Two years were spent marching, killing, besieging, and burning. One day at the storming of a gate at Zebulon, as we stood looking on together, we saw a band of Hebrew girls, armed and habited like archers, appear above the rampart. They bent their bows with great harp strings, and one flung a hammer which struck me in the face, leaving its indelible print on my lip. "I have spoiled thy mouth for kissing!" she screamed, lifting her arms with a shrill laugh of triumph. Quick as thought Florus raised the Parthian bow he held and sent an iron bolt deep into her body. When I heard the charge that was brought against Florus and the manner of Comazon's death, I wondered if the assassin, whosoever he might be, had also a Parthian bow.

I wonder if you remember my wife Pantheia? In moments of anger she was wont to look at the scar and whisper with her slow diabolical smile, "the Hebrew girl said right—*spoiled for kissing!*" We were living in Pompeii two years before it perished, and she made of my house a resort of those who at night practise rites of Isis, bringing there the priests of the moon goddess to sacrifice with mischievous dances and the flutes that breathe such deadly poison. Wherefore coming one evening into their midst, I chased the Egyptians back to their temple, and taking from Pantheia the house keys, turned her out of my door.

I often meditate upon those earlier days, when Florus and I were together, and he may sometimes have talked to you of our adventures in the midst of the hate of that Hebrew people, which despite their ruin is not yet subjugated. It was a joy to be a soldier, for the Legion was supreme. It was the school that formed men who brought to the task of conquest a capacity that touched them with the ideals of those who led. Hard and scarred, a Legion was no bad type of concentrated force. What wonder if the sight of its spears lifted the mind—if the blare of its bugles thrilled the heart!

Now we have fallen upon evil times, and musing upon the havoc of Pompeii, I ask myself if that awful scene foreshadowed a wider devastation. Ruined and dead. Can that become the fate of Rome? Yet ever, listening to the music of a marching column, filling the sky with its challenge, I believe that ages hence, when Rome has ceased to be, that sound shall still ring down the centuries, while a remembering world may whisper—so sang the unconquered!

You ask me to review the facts upon which my report to the Governor rested. Florus declares that on the afternoon of the crime he was at Vicus, which a runner might reach in an hour from Surrentum. After the lapse of a year, time of day cannot be determined. Often the best memories are not sure of a day, nor whether it was the Nones or the Ides when something happened. Domitia Lepida is able to declare that Florus was speaking with her at the door of her shop when the earliest word of the crime reached Vicus. Some hours sooner, your first husband Eutychianus, better known by the nickname of Comazon, embarked at Vicus with the boatman Sisibius, son of Gela, the blind one. He wished to sail to Surrentum, and so ordered his departure as to arrive there before sunset. He is not known to have had an enemy, nor to have been recently involved in a quarrel. Men remember little of him beyond his old-fashioned Arcadian frugality, and that when he pleased he could give his words a whip-lash sting. Surrentum laughed at his priding himself on being descended from that primitive Greek race whose women, when every male had been slain by the invader, stabbed their conquerors in their sleep, dishonour being thus changed to glory.

When within half a mile of the landing beach Comazon asked to be put ashore at the point of rocks where a footpath ascends, and the statement of Sisibius is our guide as to what followed. Immediately upon stepping ashore, and while

preparing to climb to his villa, Comazon was struck in the middle ribs by an iron shaft fixed in a hard band of cloth which caused almost instant death. Whoever discharged that bolt held a weapon of extraordinary power in whose use he was an adept. Sisibius, greatly terrified, leaped back into his boat and made for the landing-place, where he told what had happened. The town watch, followed by some idlers, hastened to where Comazon lay dead. Bending over the body leaned Passienus the dancer and Beryllus the barber. They declared that descending the cliff to bathe they heard Comazon's death-cry. They averred that the shaft could only have been discharged by one hidden in the bunch of trees near by called rustling pines. Comazon spoke but once, with ferocity. *The boatman led me into his trap.* The hiding-place was searched, but the assassin would have had more than time to escape. As to his ejaculation, did Comazon see and recognise the assailant? Into whose trap had Sisibius led him? The barber told me a straightforward story. Beryllus is a tipsy clown, but no suspicion attaches either to him or his companion.

What weapon was used to send that heavy missile flying? May it have been one of those hand catapults with whose mechanism Archimedes beguiled his leisure three centuries ago? It is an odd coincidence that the boatman went raving mad before the month ended.

I examined the fatal bolt and visited the scene of Comazon's death, the grove of rustling pines. It is forty paces from the landing beach. On the day I was there some fishermen were gathered about a kettle singing a familiar chant which Beryllus, who had come with me, said was being sung out on the bay by these same men at the moment of Comazon's death. By Mercury, the vigilant, how many were looking on, yet saw nothing! Their silly song caught my ear, though it was but the refrain of "Sea-sand turned to gold."

> From the silent dark of his grove,
> From the sunset heart of the day,
> The sun-god beckons smiling.
> His lips are forever tuned with song,
> "Oh give to me," he cries, "this hour,
> Are we not sprung from an equal dust divine!"

I smiled at the thought of what our grandsires—most of whom still clung to the Immortals—would have done to a parcel of fishermen whose audacity imagined them "sprung from dust divine." I sent Beryllus to bid them come, which they did abjectly enough, and spoke up forthwith when I told them my business. They contradicted the testimony of Sisibius in a notable particular, saying that passing quite close they overheard Sisibius beg Comazon to land at the point, as he dared not venture to the beach, being under sentence of a whipping if found at Surrentum. Admitting this to be true, then so far from Comazon asking to land, it looks as if the boatman had knowingly put him ashore to meet his danger. The fishermen added that they gave small heed to what was said and had passed on out of view.

Now comes the suspicion that first attached to Florus, when after only eight months you married him suddenly in the presence of a few intimates—you, the rich and childless widow of a man you had both detested. That you had been the love of his youth was no secret. Is it strange that people asked if his hand had bent the fatal bow? When questioned in my presence—a painful ordeal for us both—it is not unnatural that after the lapse of so long an interval he could give no account of his whereabouts other than that on hearing of the homicide he had hastened to you.

My judicial inquiry was made two months after your wedding day—that day of inauspicious incidents when it seemed some malevolent spirit cast ill omens in our teeth, from the illness of the priest to the theft of the wedding cake and the breaking of the chalice that fell. And yet I remember that day as one remembers the sunshine of some childhood we have lost. It brought back the

The Colonnade leading to the House of Florus.

promise of my own marriage, and I delighted in the joy of my friend. Your garden spoke with the liquid voice of a nymph. From its walls fell rose garlands in cascades, and your Babylonian hangings seemed like summer's tapestry. I felt that for once it had been given me to behold the rapture a day may bear in its heart.

And you, I shall never forget. To this day I think of you with hushed pleasure, as we think of last May's roses. You stood welcoming your guests, charming, delicate, and rhythmical, unperturbed even when your freedman Gehasi handed you dried, *dead* fruits, and silence followed. I divined that you are a poetess in your dainty, fugitive way, and the sight of you brought a sense of fine reeds bending by the river, of something brilliantly touched with romance, of the verse of a carefree song. Over a long tunic of linen your mantle was thrown back from the statuesque contours. And when taking your hand I murmured my salutation, your face flushed like the pink of dawn, wherefore remembering likewise the sinister omens of that hour, I urge you, if only for the sake of your newborn baby boy, to pour abundant libations to Hermes the interceder and to sacrifice to all the

(*Last lines discoloured and illegible.*)

III.

Thus far had I deciphered, doing my work in the sunshine of Hortensia's garden, aiming to seize the spirit of each writer's words and often reproducing them in modern form, when on reaching the end of Quintilian's writing its reference to Hortensia's "new-born baby boy" impressed itself upon me, and I wondered if behind it lay that voice of a crying child.

Each morning my work-table—covered with writing paper, the manuscripts, a Latin dictionary and grammar and some books of classical reference—was brought from its shelter in the atrium to a shaded angle in the peristyle, whence I looked across the Bay of Naples to Vesuvius and Parthenope. About me grew a profusion of hyacinths, and some golden-dusted mullein stalks were climbing the broken wall. The ruins of Hortensia's habitation, with their warm whiteness, seemed a daintily-carved ivory toy placed on a table of grass-green jade. It was in April, when the Italian springtime draws near on tiptoe. Beyond the cloister wall a couple of olive trees the friars had planted rose gnarled and grey, their silver branches flickering. I watched the sunshine piercing the leaves, and listened to the undersong of the sea. Beyond Misenum the saffron distance was tremulous with light of pearls. In those perfumed hours that garden's subtle dark spoke with an accent of intense significance. My thoughts were with those bygone days that must have been as beautiful as these. On the air was a murmur of things lovely and unknown, like the magic of unfolding colour, and the living glory of the air made me quick to understand that my task held a mystical revelation where immortal chariot wheels had left their trace.

Hortensia's Reply to Dexter Quintilian.

How shall I thank you, wise and gentle friend, for the good letter I have carefully preserved, yet left unanswered all these months?

I must begin by telling you the saddest word I have ever written, and writing I wonder if indeed the secret of life's futility lurks on the cynical lips of the gods. Laetus, my baby boy and the child of Florus, is dead, and every day now I hear death walking in the garden. It was two months ago, in the dawn of a winter's morning, and you who know the operation of extraordinary forces, shall tell me if from beyond our earthly ken a hand was outstretched.

When Comazon married me and took the roses out of my youth I resolved to

retain the mastery over myself and lead my own life. He was old, a pale, white rustic of a man, full of Greek cunning. My guardian, who made the marriage, called him "Rabbit-ears," since in excitement those appendages of his quivered and shifted. He had a clown's fury behind a cringing smile. His appearance reminded me of an amphora that is brought crusted and stained from the cellar. What he called love was a cupid painted on the wall. Now that his spirit has passed, I entreat you to tell me if it can have power to return from the Stygian pines?

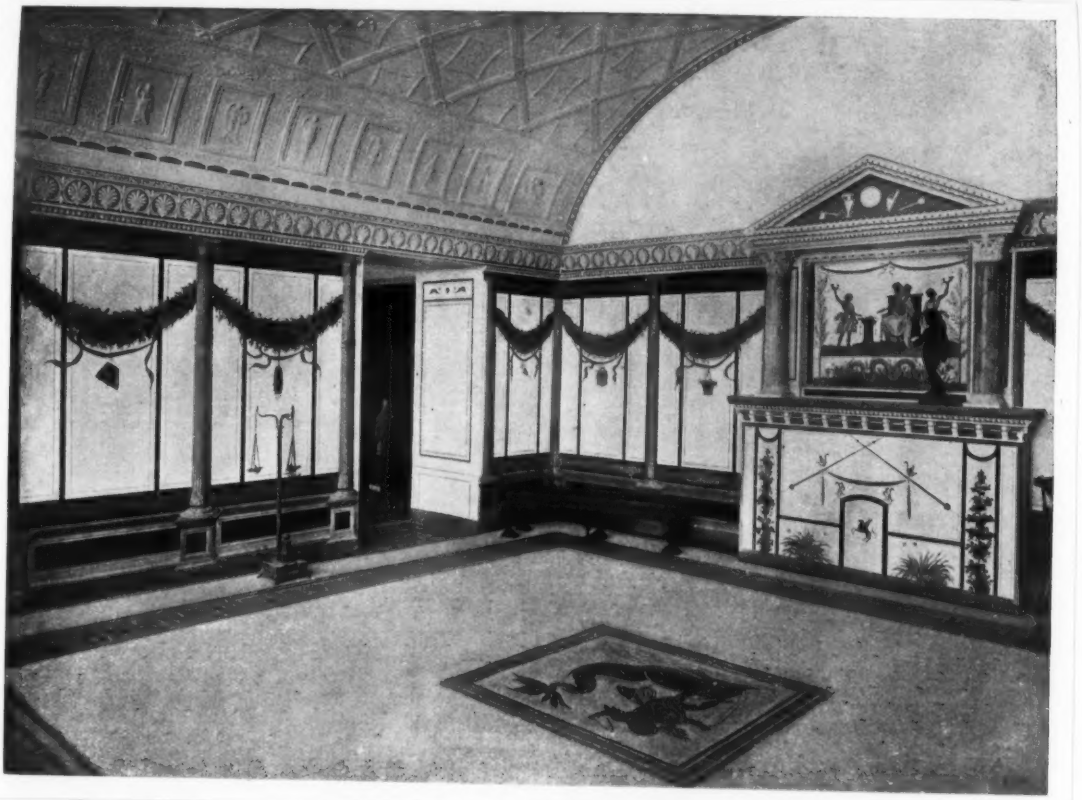
His death came in the midst of my soul's starvation—and after came Florus. When we were young—lad and girl together—we used to look in one another's eyes. I think of myself with infinite compassion in those girlish days. Once he kissed me, and that kiss burned into my life and made it his. Now, after five years' misery, he found me in the enchantment of my garden. Having never lost the sensitive instinct of youth, I have preserved a full-blooded love of wild things, and am never so deeply thrilled as when the voice of the forest speaks its everlasting truths. I was living alone in this home—which you once called a cup of opalescent crystal—alone, with Florus to come and see me every day. Can one handle fire thus, hour by hour, with never a scorch? Yet how could I resist the alluring love of my life!

Yes, Florus came, light of foot and masterful, with persuasive lips and the grace of sweet thoughts. One blue summer's evening he repeated to me the mosaic of Calvia's song, how the sun-god and Ariadne kissed, "only to kiss the air," repeated the refrain, "the air that kissed her." And my laughter ended in a sob. I was so happy that the tears rose to my eyes—I who have often said we women get from our men something of that flinty fibre which is the heart of Rome. All through those days, in the delight of the eager sunshine he had brought, the twilight of empty brooding ended. Each morning took on its own poetic lustre, and I lived anew in the traditions of these shores and headlands. I laughed to remember that satyrs with passionate eyes were said to lurk in the Pompeian byways. Often we sat together among the trees that go down-crowding to the water's edge. The jewelled bands of light and colour that came and went against Vesuvius seemed a type of antique splendour as though a transfigured vision of Troy and Carthage flitted by.

It appears that you, too, Dexter Quintilian, remember the wedding day—the milky lace of breaking waves, the scent of sacrificial fire, the thousand tiny things in Nature that fain would lift their little voice. I remember how with a snatch of song was loosed for you the sixteen-year-old wax of my choicest amphora. And drinking that purple Setian you arose and, as the Athenian flute players rippled to silence, you declared amid the clapping of hands that ages hence strange races coming after us shall taste the splendour of our Roman life as it were old wine!

We had not long been married when a murmur of public suspicion reached Florus, and over his face came a subdued look as across the sea steals the gathering dusk. I listened awestruck when he told me that returning in the brooding twilight the spirit of Comazon stood at the door and waved him back. That this had been several times repeated, that he had rushed upon the phantom, which vanished at his touch. That the spectre called him by name, its voice being elusive and mocking as a woodpecker's far-away tap. All the evening we sat silent together watching the star-clusters shaping fantastic hieroglyphs for men to read. Beside my garden's fragrant breast I listened to the sea whispering its foreboding of the ruthless to-morrow.

Next morning came to us Gehasi, the Hebrew, become a Christian, whom Florus brought from Zebulon and hath freed. The same, for all his broad black brows, is grown soft with butler's service, and offered to accuse himself of the murder of Comazon, and confess to it if by so doing he could save his master. He spoke as hushed as a breath of air. By Hercules, the traveller, he cometh



"Beyond lay a large Triclinium or Dining-room with arched ceiling."
On the sacrificial Altar is a figure of a youthful Bacchus.

from a strange land, and bringeth far-fetched imaginings—one whereof he hath scratched on the plaster wall of his lodge :

Thy sins, which were many, are forgiven.

When I questioned him about that graffito, he said that fifty years ago they had been spoken to his mother, whom he remembered as a pale, grey-haired woman. She had once been beautiful, and in its red splendour the long hair had been her wicked pride. Till, having become bitten by the acids of wayward lovings, she had anointed with passionate tears the feet of one that was crucified, and wiped them with the gold of her head.

Before the day was spent that terrible suspicion was in every mind. It was in the eyes of Demetrius, the eunuch, tidying my toilet table ; it was in the atrium's pensive splash of falling water ; I heard it in the crooning of the slave girls over their kitchen kettles, I *felt* it was written upon Nature's outdoor scroll, I caught it in the repetition of a knife-grinder's sing-song ; and Florus, listening, glanced furtively over his shoulder. . . . Yet behind the anguish of that look I perceived that he saw nothing, that his mind was far away.

Soon after, *you* came—our mists vanished, and I listened in silent joy. Your words that showed my Florus guiltless were sweet as the tuning of lutes. In an hour the discords of life fell away. It was as though you had restored the key of some remembered garden. The smiling side of life rekindled as it does in the hearts of mariners sailing by night over unknown seas when a breath of scented grasses whispers the land is near.

I have told you that two months ago our child, Laetus, died That day my youth passed from me. A foreboding had crossed my sleep as though shapes made and unmade themselves. You will say they were but waves of the night, or the wind singing of the sea. I awoke, and, looking forth, beheld the pink of early dawn, and heard the patter of phantom feet. In the next room, the door between being open, lay Helvia asleep, and beside her the boy. Near the pillow was the child's nursing bottle, and all this I saw by the spark of a dying night-wick.

All was still, yet from the heart of that silence rose a strange vibration. That dying spark was the red omen of an advancing shape which was Comazon. It noticed me not, but taking the child's bottle poured therein something that went gurgling down upon the milk. At the instant the child stirred, and Helvia sat up and gave Laetus his bottle. Then, as the spectre vanished, the child drank, whilst I stood riveted. A cry rent the night—as keen as the child-like scream of a wounded hare. At which the blood rushed to my heart, and I lighted a taper and summoned Florus and aroused the slaves. Three hours after that tiny soul had sped to the solution of its own mystery. Now with that outcry still ringing in my ears, I ask myself how the stars can shine so brightly upon an anguished world.

More than this, I know that I, too, bear upon me the marble signature of death. It was Comazon that killed my child—that will kill me, for out of the half-light his hand beckons, and his lips move in a summons only I can hear.

Farewell. The circle of my life is rounded, and that grey presence bids me go. Presently over these walls the unremembering years shall close, though it seems to me that beneath their ripple must ever linger a stain of these things.

HORTENSIA.

IV.

I began deciphering the manuscript written by Florus with an interest greatly heightened by my study of the foregoing narratives. It will be observed that he makes no circumlocution, but utters forthwith the emphatic denial of one who considers himself manifestly innocent. In important particulars his statement varies from the facts accepted by Dexter and Hortensia. He has his own theory

"The Wine Cellar, wherein leaned a score of terra-cotta wine jars."

as to the part taken in the crime by the fishermen, and his wife's terrors, which weigh against him, are dismissed as hallucinations. In his opinion the shock resulting to her from a public suspicion produced mental aberrations, which became so intense as to create an illusion regarding Laetus, and ultimately to become the cause of her own death.

The character of Florus, scantily revealed, receives a curious sidelight from the subtleties of his self-justification. Was he misjudged by that blundering sot, *vox populi?* He tasted bitter hours, and presents that spectacle the ancients loved, a strong man battling against great forces. I cannot doubt that the graffito on the atrium wall was traced by his hand—that in dwelling upon his favourite lines to Dellius, the sense of which I have rendered very freely, he was thinking less of the beauties of Horace than of his own sad heart:

> Cherish, O Dellius, a tranquil mind,
> Whether amid the good or evil things of life
> Not uplifted by the pride of thy success,
> Remembering that thou too must die.
>
> Let thy joy be in Nature's sweet repose,
> Amid the shade of interlacing boughs,
> In some fine seclusion where the streamlet
> Goes musically rippling far and far away.

Manuscript of Titus Claudius Florus.

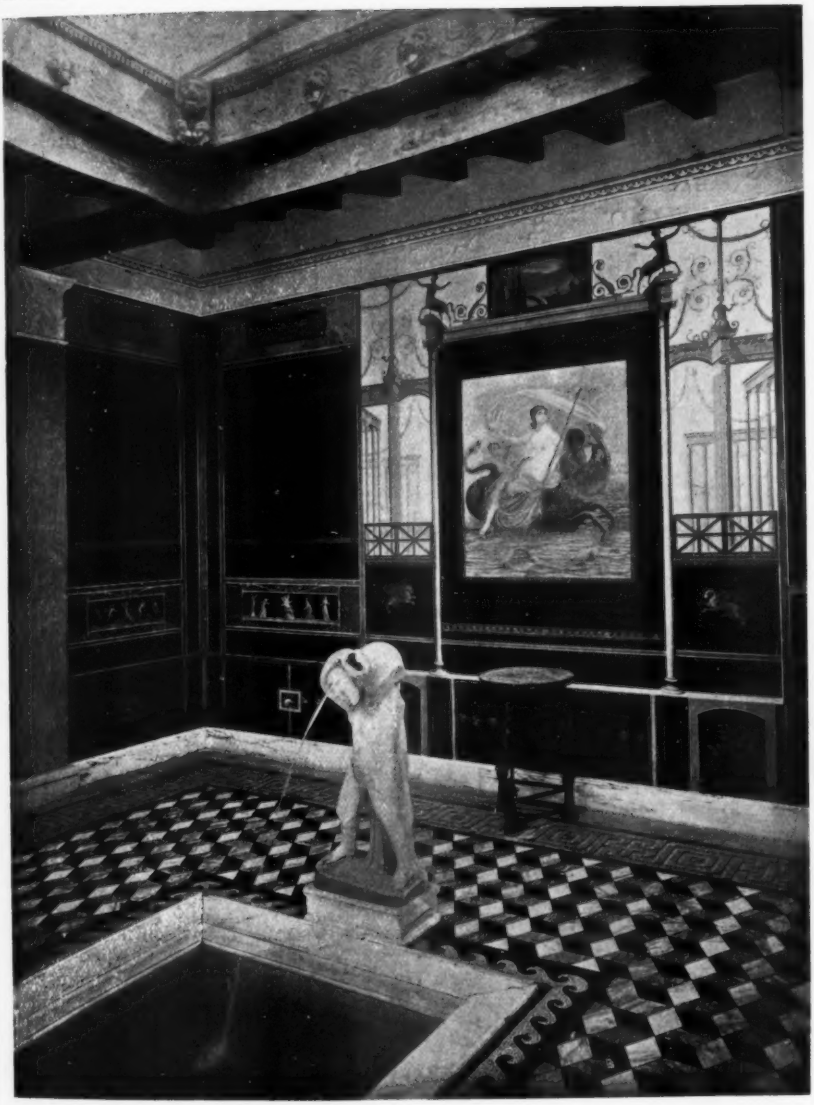
Quintilian,—I have lived my life, and am ready to meet that decisive experience that awaits us all—whether beyond that dim portal our eyes shall be opened, or are to remain forever closed. But first to you, my life-long friend, I have somewhat to say, knowing that the truth will not tear in your hands.

I have never wearied myself with vain and fugitive trifles. My passion has been the study by analysis and comparison of such grains of absolute truth as Plato and Socrates gleaned. Have we advanced a hand's-breadth, think you, since their day? From that study alone may we derive those elements of intellectual force which sustains us in this flame-lit world. So now speaking with Hortensia's name upon my lips, and in tranquil anticipation of the supreme shadow, I doubt not you will believe my words.

Two months ago I sent you my despairing announcement of Hortensia's death. She had so tortured herself between apprehension of what might befall, and distress at what had happened, that her mind became a web of fevered anxiety from the midst whereof she murmured me again and again—I pray that I may die . . . that I may die.

As to her fears, how often had I put for her the facts in measured line. You and I know that Comazon was murdered by the fishermen. As to me, Gehasi will tell you I divided that afternoon between eating a roasted kid, and playing by myself a racing game with the two little ivory chariots I bought in Rome. Now on the day preceding, it was told the fishermen that the money-lender had been repaid two small loans and a morsel of back rent upon his Panormos estate. Gehasi is ready to swear that the day before his death it was town talk at Vicus that Comazon received fifty pieces of gold. But death wipes a clean slate, and his money gettings vanished, as the four fishermen know. When Sisibius landed him at the point, he deliberately sent him to his death, and with the commission of the crime Comazon's purse of gold disappeared. The fishermen's hymn to Apollo was a blasphemous jest—they meant that from such golden dust as those shining pieces were the Immortals made and nourished. Beneath such songs is often an equivocal undertone, as it were to the physical ear a subdued sound of the distant clashing of shields. It was some such undertone—some demoniac song within the song—that Sisibius heard day and night in frantic repetition, till he went gibbering mad and died.

Now, as to the mystery of Hortensia's ending, with whom was she in spiritual



"Sometimes, sitting in the Atrium, I remember Quintilian's boast that while the world lasts the voice of Rome shall still ring down the generations."

converse throughout those visions that plagued her last years, till, from one hallucination to another, the ghastly phantoms she created rose and smote her, as Gehasi saith, to the heart?

It is he who of these things tells me somewhat beyond my own knowledge. Several mornings she paused to talk with him in the garden, questioning upon his boyhood, in that distant Hebrew land of fire, upon his fighting days when I dragged him from a burning house at Zebulon, mistaking him for my Roman servant who lay dead in its ruins, asking of his mother, the woman with long white hair, and ever returning to the meaning and power and association of the words he had graven above his pallet bed:

Thy sins, which were many, are forgiven.

Can I doubt that something secret, of vast and profound import, had revealed itself to her? Looking into the grey eyes I loved, I beheld in those days that they were dim—as though they had seen their dearest illusion fade and some terrible reality awake. Walking with me one day, tremulously smiling, yet with an air withdrawn as one who meditates upon predestined things, she said: "When springtime comes I shall be strong and glad," but before spring drew near came that death for which she prayed. Gazing in her delirium across the soft density of distance into some rare and odorous space whereof she murmured, she beheld Laetus, and imagined she was being allured by the enticement of our child. From before her faded away all earthly things, and in their place opened a transfigured enchantment with the darling face in the midst. My heart stands still when I think upon that miracle of love. What wonder if before that presence she whispered me over and over—I pray that I may die!

It was Gehasi that, with white quivering face askew, called me from my sleep. "Come quickly, master," he cried, "if, *talitha cumi!* it still be time. For an hour hath she sat in the garden, as it were her own statue watching the dawn-lit sky, till of a sudden I perceived that her face drooped, and that she moved no more."

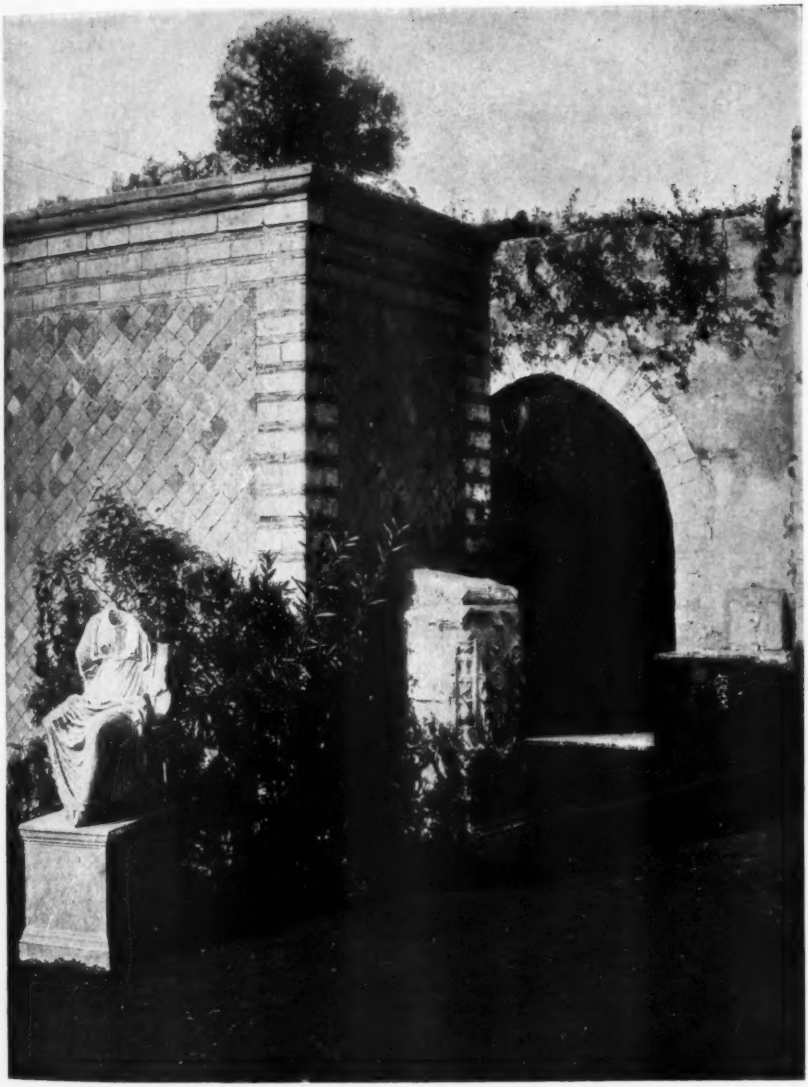
I came at a stride, and found her sitting, as Gehasi said, amid the laurel and acanthus, as it were her own statue, listening to a dear voice that calls—a voice inaudible to others. What was it she beheld or heard in that last hour of earth on the skyline beyond the makers of rainbow and mist? Behind the ripple of the waves was a faint vibrating sound like the throb that lingers when a harp-string breaks. "Can you doubt, dear master," exclaimed Gehasi, seizing my hand, "that she beheld again her dead child, and that her heart, like the bush before the prophet, leaped into flame?" He was right. She had listened to the summons of that irresistible persuasion, which those familiar with curious arts tell us links the living with the dead. If this were suicide, and if suicide be sin, may we not believe that the gods, who have themselves known and weighed human attachments, will judge very mercifully a mother who thus loosens her hold upon earthly things? Hath she gone to a sleep from which no cock crow awakens, or hereafter shall I find her again?

Then the women came, and amid many voices a coverlet was brought, and upon it I laid her. And it was the sunrise of a beautiful day, and I knew that she had passed into the light.

Wherefore now, although she rests far from here in the shade, it gladdens me that the light which was in her beautiful eyes is still for me the light of radiant mornings in her garden. Haveto.

. . . . . .

Inanimate objects acquire interest according as they are associated with human emotion. Some memory of heroism or love, the idyllic presence of a passionate romance, the wraith of an infinite unhappiness—these lend to the things of earth a divine significance. What were the mound of Troy without



"Despite all mutilation the headless and handless statue preserves the shapely symmetry of its pagan day."

its Iliad, or Olympus bereft of the footprints of the Immortals? And whoever visits that renowned Temple of Isis at Pompeii, of whose rites Dexter Quintilian disapproved, will wonder what may have been those mysteries which have made it famous?

Upon the painted walls that knew Florus and Hortensia still float Poseidon and Lyra and Antiope. The very stones seem imprint with the tragical intensity of the story they have told. Their writing has veiled them in the imperishable bloom of that Roman day. From the Silent River they speak to us of the things which were their life. Almost we feel again those vanished emotions, and where they walked remains the footprint of a brooding presence.

In Hortensia's garden linger many day-dreams of that forceful age. Its tiny span thrills with imperishable memories. To its peristyle has been restored the glory of those cascades of roses whereof Dexter Quintilian speaks. Its parterre is bright with the heliotrope and iris and anemone the ancients knew. Violets and verbena and honeysuckle and sunflowers are in profusion, so that the air is fragrant with the odours of that century. Sometimes sitting in the atrium, turning, in the purple-dusted twilight, some classic page, I remember Quintilian's boast that while the world lasts the voice of Rome shall still ring down the generations . . . and how dull must be the ear that never listens to its call!

Beneath some fallen *débris* lay a headless and handless female statue. Despite all mutilation, it preserves the shapely symmetry of its pagan day. It is a seated figure, wrought in fine marble, and has the appearance of first century work. The injuries were probably inflicted by early Christians, who in their iconoclastic zeal broke everything suspected of resembling gods and goddesses, and who, perhaps, set fire to the villa. Shattered though it be, the fragment possesses an exquisite repose, and the same serene beauty that delights us in the seated figure of Agrippina.

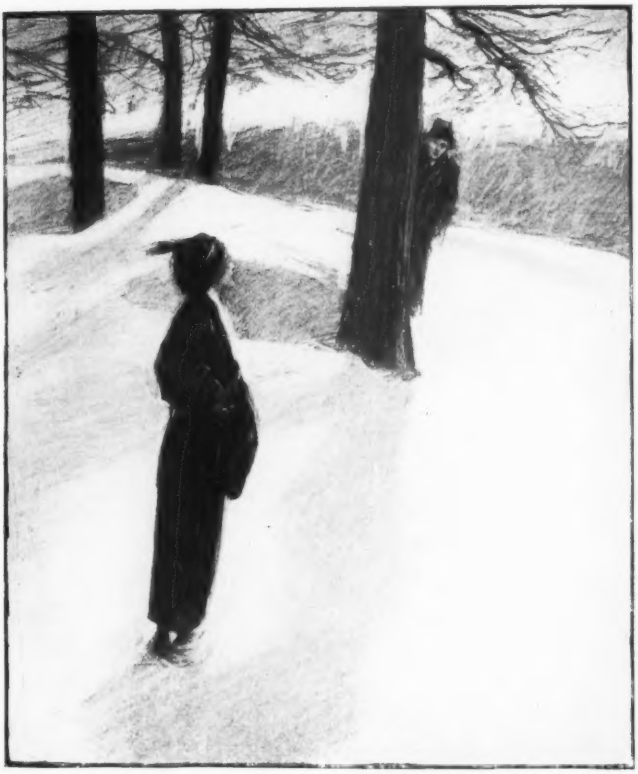
The thought suggests itself that Florus, spending here the final span of life, may have had this sculptured portrait of Hortensia placed in her garden in that attitude he describes, when against "the dawn-lit sky" she looked her last on earth.

When Mistletoe Blows

WHEN Mistletoe blows,
There's a hope in my heart!
For haply—who knows?
I may catch her apart.
When Mistletoe blows,
There's a hope in my heart!

By Lucy Nicholson.] [Illustrated by A. J. Balliol Salmon.

O! White King Frost, your icy hand
  Makes warmer still her true heart's beating!
Across the snowbound winter land,
  O! White King Frost, your icy hand
  Is laid—but soft airs, kind and bland,
  Make summer weather for your meeting!
O! White King Frost, your icy hand
  Makes warmer still her true heart's beating!



It was out in the snow,
  The first time I kissed her!
Did Boreas blow?
I'm hanged if I know! . . .
Her umbrella below,
  What man could resist her? . . .
It was out in the snow,
  The first time I kissed her!

"It was out in the snow.
The first time I kissed her!"

After the etching by Rembrandt.

"The Angel appearing to the Shepherds."

ECHOES OF BETHLEHEM

By
HENRY ALBERT PHILLIPS.

Illustrated by
A. H. Buckland.

I.

Felix Hart's Bookshop.

IT is just possible that old Felix Hart, the bookseller, knew all the while of Arthur Smith's little domestic drama with its unhappy end. For now that Christmas, with all the wonderful events it ushered into Arthur's warped life, is come and gone, it still remains for anyone to say with certainty whether Providence or Felix Hart was Arthur's greater benefactor. Although the bookseller's friendship was bestowed freely upon one and all, yet his books alone had been his real confidants. The meagre knowledge that the gossips of the shabby-genteel street had of old Felix was baffling to their reputation of knowing the sex, history and the number of bones of the skeletons that hung in every man's closet. He met all customers alike, peering genially over his steel-rimmed glasses with a pair of eyes so clear and soul-revealing that strangely set kind thoughts astir. He had a habit of chuckling softly, making his silky white beard tremble. Not that he was comic—no, no. His remarks were always the soberest, but spoken with a kernel of kindness, and had a weight that never failed to impress one. "My speciality is romance and books reflecting the bright side of life, sir," he will tell a newcomer, appearing suddenly from the depths of a dark burrow between two high shelves of musty books. "A gentleman once called me"—this invariable anecdote is always accompanied by that rare smile that warms the coldest heart—"a purveyor of happiness. Absurd remark that, of course, but it gives you the key to my line." And as the little man clad in shabby clothes, with his skull cap, spectacles and the rare smile, fades away again into the dark burrow, one feels strangely at home in the dingy place.

With this *bonhommie* in the air it is not surprising then that a few idle book-lovers of the neighbourhood make it their rendezvous, and, after the manner of idle people, exchange all the gossip of the neighbourhood—Arthur Smith's unhappy affair included. So to repeat, it *is* just possible that old Felix, the bookseller, knew all the while of Arthur's unhappy little domestic drama. Be that as it may, no one within the knowledge of the oldest frequenter of the bookshop had ever before been taken hand in hand and heart to heart in a scheme of happiness as Arthur Smith was.

Arthur was as different from the old man as shadow from sunshine. He was about thirty, and one of those tall, lanky men whose clothes flap on their lean legs and body in a way that makes you feel at once that they are shiftless. And a single look into the young man's large deep-set eyes, burning like dim lanterns in a dark night, showed that he was a citizen of dreams hanging to

things-as-they-ought-to-be and disdaining things-as-they-are. Yet those eyes made his face strangely attractive, and when his black soft hat was pulled down rakishly over his forehead, a single wisp of jet black hair lying on his dead-white brow like a fallen raven on a bank of snow, it gave the man an air of mystery that he loved only too well to convey. His taste of life had for the most part been sucked from glowing books of romance while surrounded by the eerie atmosphere of midnight, or early-morning hours after the day's labour was over, with all the other distasteful events of real life which passed over his elevated frame of mind like water on a duck's back. For he lived the life of each hero he read of with such intensity and close patterning that he was pronounced a visionary. Reading alone—and that chiefly romance—formed the bulk of his education. From gilded pages he gleaned vapid philosophy, high-sounding phrases and an air and haughtiness of manner that made him the cynosure of callow maidens and the scorn of young men, to all of which he was grandly unsusceptible—except one. He married her. But the burden he assumed on that one occasion was earth-heavy from the first; she early rankled his life with daily quarrels and cried incessantly for tangible sympathy, despising the romance of books. So only too soon Arthur fairly drove this wingless encumbrance from him with bitter taunts, and he, with bruised wings, flew back again to the clouds of romance—in other words, to Felix Hart's bookshop, where the incarnation of Arthur began.

II.

Foreshadowed.

When he closed the rattling door that memorable day he had to wipe from his eyes the dust that a bleak mid-December wind had filled them with. For a moment he stood there blinking, looking for all the world like a latter-day Knight of a Sorrowful Countenance after his tilt with the windmills of reality. When he opened his eyes free at last from dust, a carefully managed scowl shaded his dark features, giving them an air of brooding mystery. When old Felix came shuffling up he stood leaning against a rickety shelf, re-absorbed in the palpitating pages of some half-forgotten book, a cigarette dangling from his parted lips.

"Well, well, if it isn't Mr. Smith. Good-day to you! You are a sight for sore eyes."

Arthur looked up, and it was a moment before the glamour of romance faded and gave place to an ill-concealed annoyance. He languidly took the hand that was offered to him.

"How d' do?" was all he said.

"Ah, so you're reading Dumas, eh? Wonderful romances, aren't they? I read them at your age. In fact, I'd read them now if I had time. What adventures—romance—love, eh?"

Arthur looked as sheepish as though he had been caught stealing the book.

"Very grand and magnificent maybe, but you never see it like that outside of books," he scoffed with lofty scorn.

"Not outside books! Why, my dear sir, how you talk! I've seen greater romances in life than I've read in books." He lifted his glasses and looked in blinking wonder at the young man, who turned away.

"Well, I haven't," snapped Arthur with a gesture of finality.

"You're not as old as I am, Mr. Smith. But I may say that when I was your age I *lived* a romance!"

"Well, then, our paths of life have been different—no roses in mine, that's all, for I've tried this sort of thing," and he pushed away the book with a petulant sweep of his long fingers, "and there's nothing in living it—but unhappiness."

"Ah, we learn something new every day," remarked the old man, apparently amazed. "Yet you've come back to the romance shop again," he smiled pleasantly.

"Yes," Arthur sighed elegantly, "I just simply had to. But don't let me bother you now—I'll just look around," he added significantly.

"Let me bother you just a minute. I think you'd like this. It's the story of a wonderful love," suggested Mr. Hart, handing Arthur a well-worn volume.

"That? I've already read it—a year ago—and it gave me false ideas, too. There never were two people that loved each other as much as those two, let me tell you, and through such hardships and miseries as they bore on their breasts. And I know what I'm talking about, too!"

"It does seem more than human—heavenly—doesn't it?"

"I didn't mean it that way. I meant—but honestly, now, you don't believe it could really transpire that way, do you?"

"I must confess I do, Mr. Smith. And this book," he took it up and gently thumbed the pages, "I happen to know was written from life."

Arthur was plainly startled at the bare idea of such a thing being possible.

"It don't seem possible to me. And you really knew these people?" His tone was incredulous.

A customer entered just then, but before Mr. Hart could go Arthur held him by the sleeve for an answer.

"Oh, the two people in the book? Well, I suppose I must make a confession, then. *I* was one of them."

Arthur drummed absently on the cover of the book. This was the first time he had ever stared with discerning eyes at an episode of Life, and he didn't quite believe his eyes. He left the shop still shaking his head. Under his arm he carried the wonderful record of the *real* Romance. And so the wonderful episode of Christmas Eve was already foreshadowed.

"When old Felix came shuffling up he stood leaning against a rickety shelf, re-absorbed in the palpitating pages of some half-forgotten book."

III.

The Book of Life.

Thus it happened that a sort of kinship was established between two men whose breasts held treasures denied to the public eye. Mr. Hart knew this the very next day when Arthur strolled in with the book. As the old man came shuffling along with a pile of books he looked up into the young man's face and saw that the curtain of mystery in Arthur's eyes had been lifted for him, and that they were friends.

"Hello, Arthur!" he hailed him unceremoniously.

"How d' do, Mr. Hart? Thanks for the loan of your book; I've enjoyed it more, knowin' it was true. That's the way *I've* always wanted it to turn out," he said regretfully. "But things were so different in them days."

"Believe me, love is never different—or at least never should be."

Arthur was silent for a moment over this, and forgot to puff his cigarette, which drooped languidly and went out.

"Haven't *you* ever thought of marrying, Arthur?"

The young man looked up sharply, a scowl of suspicion wrinkling his brow. But Mr. Hart was just then lifting a great pile of books to a high shelf, so that Arthur could not see his face.

"Me!" he said at length, then paused again, and gave the old man, who was humming a tune, a searching look. "Well, suppose I did marry, what then? I'd want it a *little* bit like what I've read of in books. I wouldn't give up Romance."

"There was a man—not so many years ago either—who for the woman he loved gave up a principality. The next day he told his friends that he had come into a kingdom."

"Here were displayed a few strips of green and tinsel and an image of Santa Claus. Gazing into the window, feasting and lusting on the sight, were two small children, hand-in-hand."

Arthur ignored this parallel with a shrug of annoyance.

"*You* could and did do differently when you were young; but look at the difference in the women nowadays! Lord, *what* a difference! Suppose I married—well, say a stenographer." He cleared his throat suspiciously. "She's pretty, say, and comes from goodness knows where. Ther'd be a week of something like Romance. Then you make discoveries—never read a thing, she hasn't. Best thing she knows is how to wash dishes—fairly soaked in dishwater, so you can't come near her, maybe—can't even cook Still, she wants to keep on dressin' like a typewriter——"

"That would be part of *her* Romance, Arthur. A man should give in a little there."

Arthur had dropped from bitterness to anger now. Disillusionment was hard.

"Give in nothin'," he growled. "Do you think she'd give in when the subject of kids is brought up? No, they don't want kids nowadays, it ain't the fashion; but *I* want 'em, I tell you. Why, in almost any book you read they marry, have children, and live happily ever after."

"So that's it," said the old man softly. Then louder, "Young wives have always been timid about that, Arthur. You see, they know what it means. Ever been in a house when a child was born?"

"Aw, what's that got to do with it?" Arthur's phraseology became commonplace under strong emotion. "What did our mothers do about it, eh? Tell me that!"

"My wife died in giving birth to my baby, Arthur."

"But that wasn't in the book!"

"No, it might have spoiled the Romance, Arthur."

Arthur was staggered for a moment at this, and then went on stubbornly:

"Well, anyway, you don't find it like what you read about in books."

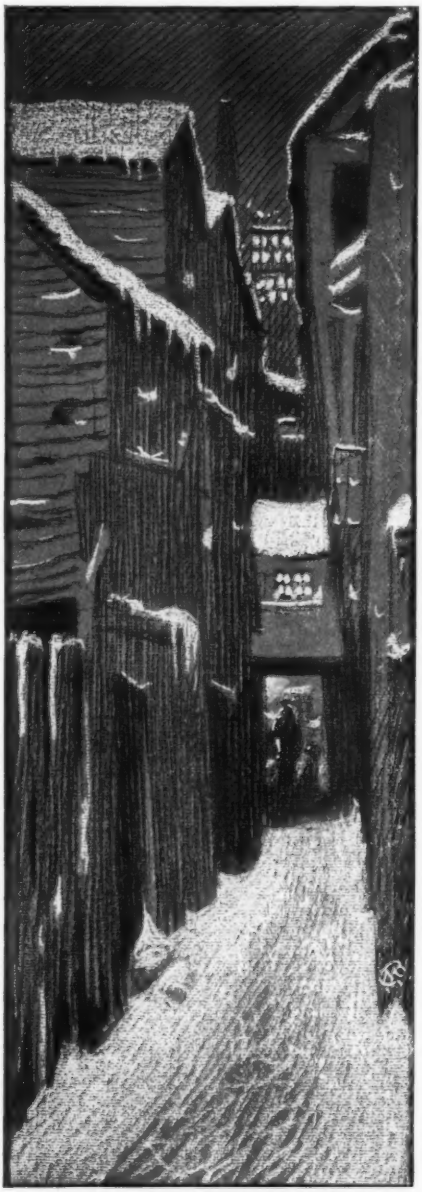
"The Book of Life is not written on paper and bound between boards."

"Who'd want it to be, when there's nothin' but quarrelin' from mornin' to night, and the wife wantin' to go back to typewritin' again — that's what I call hell. Who can live with women like that?" he challenged; "I can't!"

"Why, I had never paused to look at it from that standpoint, Arthur. I was always wondering how they could do so much for us men for so little return. I only know that it's true of all women that they look to man to give *them* romance, and he can't do that unless he is happy with his venture. Have you been happy all along, Arthur? Are you happy now, boy?"

Arthur looked at the old man with an almost tragic look in his eye as the absence of the coveted thing dawned on him, and then, in defeat, cried out irreverently, "Oh! what's the use of talkin' to you about the women of to-day!"

The old man watched him with a sad but triumphant smile as he slammed the door after him. He knew that he had effected a void in the youth's breast that only a human experience could fill.



"You don't mean to tell me that men and women live in there, too?"

IV.

The Christmas Decorations.

When Arthur came to the bookshop again he found the old man standing on a rickety ladder with his face very red from reaching dizzy heights.

"Perhaps I can help," he said; and in his kindly voice and manner was a confession and penance for his irritable rudeness of a few days ago. "Why these gay garlands?"

"Why, you young heathen, to ask me what I'm doing with these greens, and Christmas less than a week off." He knew well how to utilise Arthur's lofty scepticism.

"Well, I'm afraid I don't celebrate that simple tradition any more," he said pushing back his hat and looking up at the old man with an air of wisdom. "Here, why don't you let me do that for you?"

"But you did believe it when you were a boy? Here's the tacks, Arthur."

"Oh yes. But I believed anything *then*," he said carelessly, tacking up a festoon of laurel.

"Have you been happier since you stopped believing the splendid things of Christmas? Put the big wreath in the centre—that's it."

"Well, I haven't ever been very happy as a man anyway." He paused as if to think it over for the first time, striking a wistful attitude. At length he sighed and looked hard at the old man who was humming a merry air as he unwrapped a large picture. "Tell me, what is it makes *you* always seem so happy? You're forever grinnin', whistlin' or hummin' around this dingy old shop. I never could understand it."

"The child was a typical product of the slums . . . . Her clothes—even to her shoes—were for the most part those her mother had previously worn out."

"Well, you see, Arthur," he replied looking up with a smile, "I've never stopped believing in Christmas, or Romance, or any of the beautiful things of life—that's why. Greens all up, eh? Now let me see—we'll put this print of Rembrandt's 'The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds' in the centre of the window there—can you reach it? It's hung there for the past twenty years during Christmastide. Look at it, boy; isn't there something big about it that grips your heart?"

Arthur scrutinised the print a moment, and the hard lines in his face gradually disappeared. "Yes," he said sincerely, "for it reminds me of what I wanted most in the world."

"Did you want a child more than you did anything else, Arthur—more

than a wife?" It contained the vaguest echo of a reproach.

"Oh, I don't believe I know just what I want lately, Mr. Hart," he said dejectedly, hanging up the print.

"I know, though, boy—you want happiness. Arthur, I remember just after a very sad event in my life that I went out and *bought* happiness."

"Come, you're not jokin' with me, are you, Mr. Hart?"

"I never jest about sacred things, Arthur."

"I can't help but believe whatever you tell me, Mr. Hart—but honestly, I always thought that happiness would be about the last thing anyone could buy. I can't see it."

"A pound or two in season will do it."

"Well, I've got almost a hundred pounds saved up, and I'd give every penny of it for a week of happiness. I wonder if there's a place where you can buy Romance, too?" he added loyally.

"Yes, Arthur, I've shelves of it for sale. But already you've bought your head full of it, now I want to fill your heart with it, boy. Mark my words, you'll find Romance and Happiness dwelling side by side in the same house, Arthur."

"'Say, little 'Stasia,' he said joyously as they neared the alley, 'I have never been so happy in all my life!'"

The young man was silent several minutes digesting this, then he asked with suppressed eagerness, "When will you go to—to—buy—this happiness?"

"On the happiest night the world has ever known—Christmas Eve."

"Will you take me with you?" His voice was earnest and low.

"I've been going to ask you to come, Arthur."

Thereupon was the way paved for Arthur to take his first step down from the heights of Romance towards the ranks of Life.

V.

Christmas Eve.

The eve of Christmas enveloped the great city like a heavy damp blanket, secreting in its folds of mist a million nettles of frost which bit the fingers and noses of the hordes of holiday shoppers as they groped through it. One of the main thoroughfares of the city's poor quarters was glutted with bundle-bearing throngs as Arthur and old Mr. Hart alighted from a car and elbowed their way into the midst of it. Mr. Hart

led the way with a readiness that bespoke a knowledge of his ground. They soon left the crowded street and plunged into an almost deserted side-street lined with gaunt tenements, from which dim lights shone timidly to great heights through murky, uncurtained windows. These great hulks of habitation teemed with tenants. Each dingy hallway blared forth its uncouth babel of noise as they passed: cries of babies, and chatter of children; coarse, mirthless laughter and shrill feminine voices—but never a sound of wholesome joy. It was a little after six, and consequently feeding hour for those who were fortunate enough to have food, and every squalid apartment held its three or four hungry mouths. The thousands of children that swarmed the street by day, leaving it now a deserted, weird and misty thoroughfare, were herded somewhere in the squalid depths of these great sties.

Already the sordid atmosphere had begun sorely to test Arthur's refined senses, so well trained in the Bookland where none hungered or walked unwashed. He did not fully understand the nature of the adventure yet. His former quests of elusive happiness had been along such vastly different roads.

"Can't we keep to the lighted streets?" he asked, with a shudder.

"But you won't find the misery there so easily, Arthur?"

"Misery! I thought we were looking for happiness?" demanded Arthur in a distrustful tone, as though he had been misled.

"And so we are."

Arthur stopped dead still, as though struck a blow, so staggering were the revelations of real life to him. "Oh!" he said, and they walked on again.

"Yes, you can buy more happiness for two pence in a dark alley than you can for a pound in a lighted street."

"So that's it, is it?" And the issue of the adventure as to Arthur was problematical indeed until they came to a little shop whose dingy windows blazoned forth the first symbols of Christmas they had seen since leaving the big street. Here were displayed a few strips of green and tinsel and an image of Santa Claus. Gazing into the window, feasting and lusting on the sight, were two small children, hand-in-hand. In an instant Arthur pounced on them like a bird of prey, thrusting a sixpence and some pennies in their disengaged hands. They stopped their shivering and gazed up into Arthur's eyes with unspeakable awe.

"Merry Christmas, kids!" was all he said, and when he joined Mr. Hart his cheeks were flushed and his eyes were filled with a strange incandescence whose dynamo is the heart.

"Did you notice the kids when I handed them the pennies?" he asked breathlessly.

"I couldn't help it. They will never forget Christmas now as long as they live, and nothing will ever shake their belief that it is a season of Providential blessings."

"And I gave them that feeling! Say, it's great to be able to do things like that, ain't it? Let's find somebody else."

The next opportunity came when they were passing the saloon on the next corner. An old derelict was thrust forcibly out almost against them.

"What's the matter?" asked Arthur, as the man began grumbling in a maudlin manner, rubbing his cold, shrunken hands together.

"I'm hungry. Gotta penny, mister?" wailed the man. "Honest t' God it's for somethin' to eat—so help me God, I'm starvin'—an' them——"

"I believe every word of it, old fellow," said Arthur compassionately. Here, put on these mittens, man, and here's a shilling for your Christmas."

"Christmas—did yer say Christmas?"

"Say, wasn't it great the way that poor devil looked at us. Something came into his face that made me look away."

"That was his soul, Arthur—just as God gave it to him."

"It seemed as though he gave me something, instead of me givin' him."

"He did. You're really his debtor."

VI.

The Cry in the Alley.

A minute or so later and Mr. Hart paused at the entrance of a dark alley. Even Arthur's enthusiasm was dampened as he took a step into it.

"You're not goin' through that black place, are you, Mr. Hart? Why, there might be anything that's wicked there. Listen! Did you ever hear such ungodly noises, though! What's that thumping?" Above the sounds of drunken swearing and brawling came occasional poundings.

"Restless horses, I think, Arthur."

"Horses! Why, there's a stable in there, then. What the deuce have we got to do with a stable tonight?"

"Everything. No setting could be more appropriate. Christmas began in a stable, Arthur."

"One of the Italian children lay asleep from the weariness of joy, a teddy bear clasped tight in her little brown arms."

"But—listen! You don't mean to tell me that men and women live in there, too?"

"Worse than that, Arthur—children."

'Oh, maybe it's all right then, if you know the place!"

They had taken several steps int the malodorous alley, Arthur shudder ing as his fingers slid against the dark side walls, to which the clammy mist clung in great beads, when out of the night somewhere rang a high-pitched moaning wail. Higher and higher it soared, beating the heavy air into shuddering vibrations as with fists clenched in pain. Suddenly it sank to silence, as if suppressed by exhaustion. The brawling, even the pounding, ceased as if bidden, and a creaky window was raised somewhere.

"My God, what's that?"

"A woman, Arthur."

"Let's get out of this, for God's sake, before it comes again. I never heard such agony. What is it? Some brute of a man beatin' her?"

"No, it's Nature at work, Arthur. A veritable echo of Bethlehem. I have no doubt that Mary nearly two thousand years ago tonight uttered just such a cry."

"Is it *that*, Mr. Hart?"

Arthur's voice sank to an awed whisper. He leaned heavily against the wall as though struck in a vital spot by an unexpected bolt of Truth.

This was the moment of Arthur Smith's re-incarnation.

Then the cry rose again, not quite so piercingly loud, so that it seemed to oppress the heart rather than the ear. And again the holy hush sank

deep into the bosom of the night after it.

"Poor devil! Can't we do something, Mr. Hart?"

"Maybe we can, boy."

At that instant something came whirring through the dark alley like a bat and struck against Arthur's leg with a little cry.

"My, kid, but you scared me! My, but I'm all unstrung, though! Don't be frightened, kid, I'm not goin' to hurt you. Here's some pennies, now quit your bawlin' an' tell us what's the matter with you. Quick, 'cause we're in a hurry."

"It isn't money she wants, Arthur—that won't alleviate fear. Here, little one, come over here in the light—don't be frightened, dear—why are you crying? Tell us and we'll try to help you."

The child was a typical product of the slums. Perhaps eleven years old, although shrunken from hunger and lack of nourishment to the size of an eight-year old child. Her clothes—even to shoes—were for the most part those her mother had previously worn out.

"No, no, mister, I musn't stop," she pleaded. "Me mother'll beat me if I do. Didn't you hear that lady—there she goes again!" Again the unearthly cry shuddered through the dark unwholesome spaces of the back yard. "She's ma's cousin an' stays wid us, an' she was took awful sick, an' ma says I got to git a doctor er she'll die, an' I dono where no doctor is."

"There, Mr. Hart! Just what I wanted. I can help her! Come, hurry, kid, we can't let her suffer that way," cried Arthur shuddering as the cry rang out again, seeming to recur at ever shorter intervals.

"I'll go a little way with you, Arthur. Tell me, little one, who was that making all that noise just before."

"Oh, that's only them O'Brienses," she volunteered as they hurried along, with an eagerness that bespoke much listening over transoms and astute training of a sharp-tongued mother. "Ma says ole man O'Brien was celebratin' Christmas, and was breakin' up the wife, furniture and the kids just because there was nothin' t' eat when he come home drunk."

"Nothing to eat! Just think of that, Arthur—starving on Christmas Eve! I'll go with you as far as the big street now, I guess."

"Ain't it splendid and fortunate to think we came, Mr. Hart?"

"Ah, Arthur, there's a thousand as bad—some worse, God help them."

"How'd you ever come to single out this one?"

"Oh, I just took a special interest in it, Arthur. What is your name, little girl?"

"'Stasia Jones, mister."

"I once knowed of some Joneses," mumbled Arthur with evident distaste.

"Are there many children in your house, 'Stasia?"

"Five famblies, an' all got kids. The sheenies next door's got three kids, an' one has to work 'cause the father's got consumption; an' a Dutch fambly of kids jes' moved in upstairs, an' some Ginnies on the first floor, but ma won't let me play with *them* 'cause they're Dagoes; an' the O'Brienses lives back of 'em—they're poorer than we are, ma says, even if Tim O'Brien has got a p'litical job cleanin' bars; he mos' always takes his pay in drinks, ma says, an'——"

"And here we are," said Mr. Hart, interrupting the breathless 'Stasia, who had forgotten the sick lady in the luxury of gossip. "Just go north a few streets, Arthur, and I'm sure you'll soon see a doctor's sign. I've got some work that will keep me busy till you return. See you both later!"

A doctor was soon found, who waived all signs of reluctance that the patient's neighbourhood caused when Arthur placed a retainer in his professional hand.

VII.

The Stable.

Thereupon Arthur set about making this the grandest occasion in little 'Stasia's life. The two were soon a part of the great throng bent one and all in

buying happiness for themselves through gifts to others. Christmas was on every tongue, Santa Claus in every window, and by the bulky packages in everybody's arms it seemed hard to doubt that money was plentiful even here in the midst of the poorest poor. One tiny tree, each pitifully cheap doll or teddy bear, or tin horn or lead soldier was going to add its glad note in making the morrow the gladdest of festivals.

"Does Christmas come every year?" asked 'Stasia ecstatically, as she put the sleeve of the new dress Arthur had

"The 'Sheenie' kids stood saucer-eyed about a tiny tinsel-covered tree, on which two coloured candles gasped their last."

look in their eyes though, lit with the rare joy of giving as they were, discerned the anxious mind behind that was computing every scarce penny. But there was joy nevertheless, such joy that comes only once a year—with Christmas. Each painted toy, each just bought her close to her little nose and inhaled its delicious odour.

"Yes," said Arthur, who was busy buying little remembrances also for the Ginnies, Sheenies and all the rest of the stable folk. "But I never knew it."

'Stasia was not alone in Fairyland—Arthur was with her heart and soul. Suddenly he asked, just as though he had not been thinking of it from the first moment:

"'Stasia, what do babies want for Christmas?"

"Why, they don't want nothin', but they cry for everythin'," she replied somewhat unfeelingly.

"Well, they ain't born with clothes on anyway," remarked Arthur after a little thought, and straightway proceeded to buy a full infantile wardrobe. Then there was the sick lady herself—a great sympathy and veneration for her had grown in his heart that pervaded everything else he did. All he and 'Stasia could think of was beautiful flowers, some ice-cream and New Year's cakes.

"Say, little 'Stasia," he said joyously as they neared the alley, "I have never been so happy in all my life!"

"Neither ain't I," avowed 'Stasia.

"I only wish—but just wait till to-morrow for *that*!" And Arthur was both wistful and determined. But they had now reached the hallway of the near tenement.

Every raucous, strident and pounding noise had ceased, even that terrible cry of pain—all were stilled, and only now and then were voices raised, and, strangely, they seemed the utterances of sheer joy. A miracle had surely taken place in their absence! Several of the tenants had thrown their doors wide open—an unusual thing—and through these they saw that Christmas had mysteriously visited every family. One of the Italian children lay on the floor asleep from the weariness of joy, a teddy bear clasped tight in her little brown arms; the "Sheenie" kids stood saucer-eyed about a tiny tinsel-covered tree, on which two coloured candles gasped their last, their tuberculous father lay on a couch sniffing a great red rose. From the bottom to the top of that squalid stable, illy converted into a human habitation, the spirit of Christmas reigned in a splendour that beggared a palace by comparison. The O'Briens invited 'Stasia and Arthur to share the good meal they were ravenously devouring. Tim O'Brien, sobered by the appeal made to his after all big heart, was shamefacedly winding a mechanical toy for the children who stood around in blinking wonder.

"Ah, thank you, sor," said Mrs. O'Brien tearfully as Arthur unloaded his gifts with "A Merry Christmas; these are from me an' 'Stasia." "There's angels in the air to-night—yore the sicond wan. If I cry a little, sor, it ain't only foolishness, it's a prayer for yer good soul. Merry Christmas, sor; an' here, 'Stashie, do you be takin' up this little broth to the little sick angel—God bless her!—that's stayin' wid yez. Wait, I'll hold the light fer ye to go up them black stairs."

VIII.

Echoes of Bethlehem All!

As they reached 'Stasia's door they heard a tiny wail from somewhere. "That Dutch kid!" sniffed 'Stasia, her sentiments even now loyal to feudal traditions. When they entered the doctor was just leaving. The first person they saw inside was the old bookseller.

"Oh ho, now I know who the mysterious Santa Claus is. 'Stasia, it's him!" cried Arthur good-naturedly. "What'd you take all the glory out of my path for?"

"I didn't; I've left *your* path in all its glory—untouched."

"I'm glad you did that, Mr. Hart, for I've got serious reasons why I wanted to shoulder a case like this."

"So have I, Arthur; however, if I'd waited for you the rest of the good people would have been cheated out of several hours' happiness."

"Why, we ain't been gone an hour yet, have we, 'Stasia?"

"'Bout a half-hour," testified 'Stasia.

"It is true, then, what they say: 'there are no clocks in heaven!' Why, boy, it's nearly three hours since we met 'Stasia in the alley."

A tiny cry rose just then from the adjoining room.

"What's that!" demanded 'Stasia and Arthur in a breath.

"Just another echo of Bethlehem—it's the sick lady's Christmas. Her heart will be full of it to-morrow."

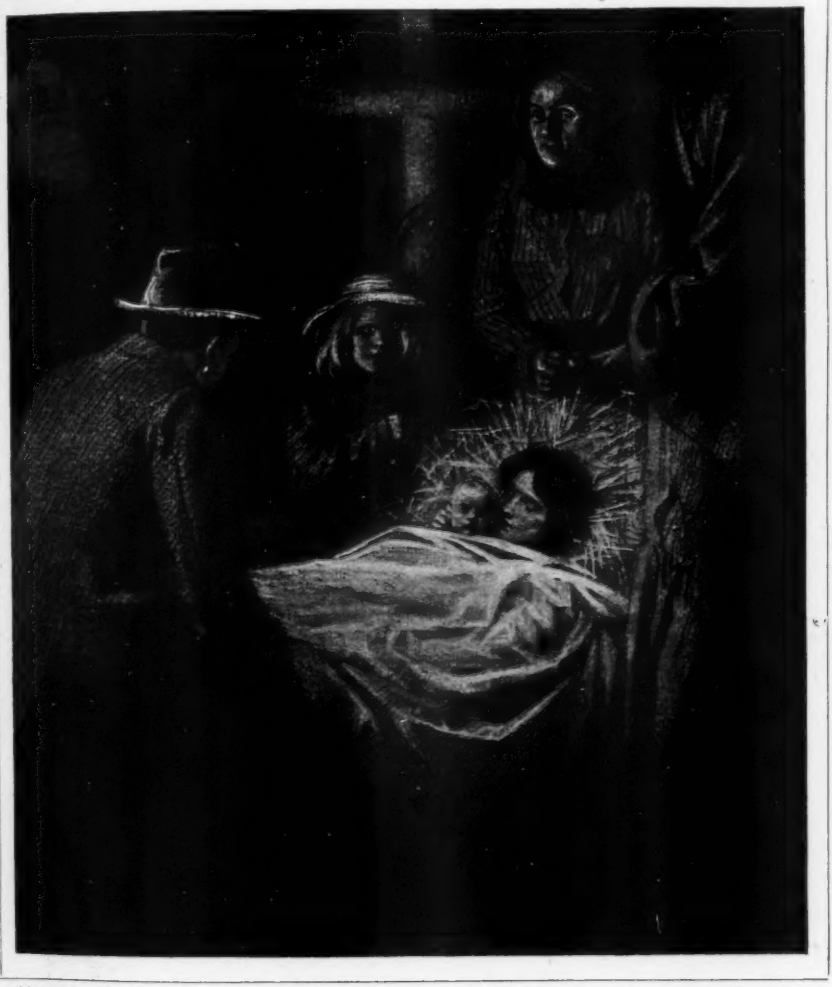
"The baby!" exclaimed Arthur, his voice softened to a whisper. "Ah, if only they were all like her," he murmured, and gave a heartrending sigh.

"Arthur, they *are* all like her—from blessed Mary to blessed—to this lady."

"I'm beginning to think you're right. Say, Mr. Hart——" he hesitated a second. "I want you to help me make right an awful mistake I've made. Think we could to-morrow?"

"The greatest event this world has ever seen happened to-morrow—Christmas."

"Look!" cried Arthur, his hand raised, his face alight with something more real than dreams. Mrs. Jones



"'My God, it's Mamie, Mr. Hart! My Mamie, my wife!' cried Arthur, not yet daring to touch the two still inanimate burdens of frail flesh."

had led 'Stasia over to see the sick lady's Christmas before being put to bed. The good-hearted woman stood beside the invalid's bed, the lamp raised high and so shaded as to cast a golden glow which seemed to emanate from the two forms on the bed and then softly glide away into the dark shadows around. 'Stasia stood, her little hands clasped tremblingly, a puzzled expression in her eyes of mingled adoration and wonder at coming suddenly face to face with her first mystery. "Is that what the lady wanted fer Christmas, ma?" whispered 'Stasia.

"More than anythin' else, 'Stasie."

"It makes me think of that picture of Rembrandt's you got hangin' in the window though!"

"It's the same great mystery over again, Arthur—always as holy."

"It's funny, ain't it? but it's made me feel almost religious like, Mr. Hart."

"I, too, Arthur. One can understand better the holy hush that fell over the world that first Christmas, after a thing like this."

"I'm sure I can understand now, Mr. Hart."

"Hark! There's still another echo of Bethlehem—there's Mary calling for her first-born!"

"I'd like to go look at the—the baby, Mr. Hart, but I'm almost afraid to."

"Nonsense, boy. Go along; there's nothing would please its mother more, I'm sure."

Mrs. Jones had taken the half-asleep 'Stasia to a little windowless room and was putting her to bed, leaving the sick lady and her baby alone.

Arthur tip-toed over, his hand extended tremblingly as though both to further the quiet and to beg pardon for intruding. He stopped suddenly as he got within the circle of light—he was gazing at the mother strangely, not at the child. She lay, her hair the only blur on the white pillow, her pain-wearied eyes still shut.

"My God, it's Mamie, Mr. Hart! My Mamie, my wife!" and he was down on his knees, but not yet daring to touch the two still, inanimate burdens of frail flesh.

"Say, Hart!" he demanded in a fierce whisper, turning towards the old man who had risen, hat in hand, with one hand to his eyes as though shading them from the bright vision before him, the other reaching for the door-knob. "I think you knew this all the time!" Then he laughed a low gurgling, irrelevant laugh of sheer joy. The romance of books was never like this!

"I only knew that you could buy happiness, Arthur. Hark! It's just striking twelve—Christmas has come, boy! I have a great desire now to go out of doors to meet the wise men, or perhaps to penetrate the pastures if only to see the worshipping shepherds. I'm sure there's a wonderful star hanging over this stable, too, to-night. I'll run in later and tell you about it. Till then, Happy Christmas, everybody!"

And as he quietly closed the door Arthur laid his head on the edge of the bed and sobbed softly while a white wisp of a hand stole gently to his lips telling him that she, too, understood. Across the bed there rose a tiny whimper as of sympathy.

Echoes of Bethlehem all!

PANTOMIME LAND.

How a Pantomime is produced.

BY JAMES M. GLOVER.

"LADIES and gentlemen, this is a very long and a very heavy pantomime." "Yer rite, Gus, it is." The first speaker was the late Sir Augustus Harris on the first night of a Drury Lane pantomime when a hitch had occurred and the bucolic rejoinder came from Olympian heights, which are always good humoured in holiday time. On another occasion,

Photo] *Mr. "Jimmy" Glover* [Illustrations Bureau.

as we marched a procession of "red lobsters across the stage in a fish ballet, the gallery critic shouted, "Lord, Gus, you've boiled the bally lobsters!" which Harris had really done for a colour effect.

The evolution of a Drury Lane pantomime, whatever the net results may be, is a much more serious undertaking than the mere outsider may credit. If the little ones could only know and appreciate all the trouble that is taken for their delectation I am certain their delight would be quadrupled. But this old entertainment which is always new and has outlived the sarcasm, scorn and satire of the high-toned critic, will live for ever. It used to be the habit of the older illustrated journalism, three months before the Noel-time, to educate the little ones with picture, paint and paragraph in the joys of the Dickensian Yuletide, with its attendant holly and ivy, its pantomimes with its harlequins, clowns, columbines and pantaloons. Back from school the "pater" and "mater" had this library of juvenile delight ready prepared for the young folks, who talked of nothing else except of the creations of their nursery-book lore, and loved nothing better than to see the realisation later on—on the stage—of their nursery-room heroes and heroines. Show a child a picture, tell it "That's a clown," and it will talk nothing but clown till its little memory fades in age. And the information that it will be "taken to the pantomime to see the clown," or, as a threat, put negatively as a punishment, and that child will live in pantomime-land and make your life a worry till it is taken there and the man in the motley comes on.

Now this old journalism has given place to the new. We take our Christmas Number of the illustrated weekly away to the seaside in the hot August; and what was once reserved for a Gargantuan children's feast on Boxing Day is divided with illicit flirtations with Gollywogs, Teddy bears and the other mechanical blandishments provided by the toy-producing emporiums that cater for the public.

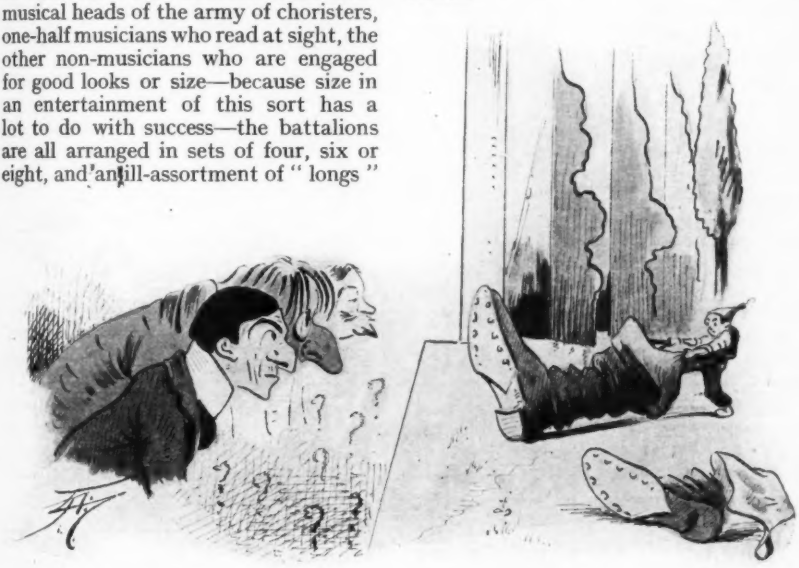
But let that pass. The Christmas entertainment at Drury Lane has had many rivals, but it still pursues a merry career, and is now taking four times the receipts that it did fifty years ago, and being patronised by an equal increase in the juvenile public.

It is a tradition, an institution, a domestic monument as solid and stolid as the "Roast Beef of old England," and its Good Fairy and Bad Fairy eternally at strife, with the triumph of virtuous spangles in the end, are the children's drama which only the children's laws can give.

One commences with the story—how the manager, the author, the composer, having provided themselves with an entire library of Arabian-Nights-Hans-Andersen-lore, sit for days, weeks and hours, often ten and twelve hours at a sitting, working out the dramatic possibilities of how "Cinderella" ought to go to the Ball, or how "Jack" should really climb the "Beanstalk," or how "Dick Whittington" might possibly get shipwrecked or eaten up himself by the Emperor's rats and never be thrice Lord Mayor of London. And wasn't there a big row about anachronisms when, introducing a motor-car on the stage for the first time, the late Sir Augustus Harris had the beautiful pumpkin-produced-ponies taken out of the carriage to have it immediately propelled by electricity—provided by a huge serpentining black cable which trailed the stage till the curtain dropped on Part 1.

The scenic models have to be acclimatised to the story, the artists to the music; the book has to be written to develop the plot, to arrange for the various changes of costume, and the setting of the scenes behind. The scheme of colour—always an artistic one—must be so arranged that Eastern scene must not follow Eastern scene, and if it must do this perforce of historical accuracy, a variety of contrast is then introduced, so arranged as not to clash. All this more or less in hand brings us to about the first week in November. Then we engage three pianists—(*a*) as a *chef du chant* for chorus work, (*b*) as a pianist for the

ballet, (c) as a like accompanist for the principals. These different entities work independently for over a full month. The chorus master teaches every human soul in the rank and file a four-part musical arrangement of every number in the pantomime. For five to seven hours a day, 11 to 1 with an interval, 2 to 5 or 6, and later on 7 to 11 at night, and often till the small hours in the morning, he hammers the tunes, the harmonies and other niceties of the score into the sometime non-musical heads of the army of choristers, one-half musicians who read at sight, the other non-musicians who are engaged for good looks or size—because size in an entertainment of this sort has a lot to do with success—the battalions are all arranged in sets of four, six or eight, and an ill-assortment of " longs "



A difficult problem: " How will the ogre boots fit Hop-o'-My-Thumb ? "
A drawing at rehearsal by Mr. Conelli, showing Mr. Arthur Collins, Mr. Glover and Mr. G. R. Sims.

and " shorts " would spoil the harmony and symmetry of the whole.

Sometimes the exigencies of time force us to rehearse on a stage ten times smaller than Drury Lane—as we once had to do at Terry's—and the result is very quaint. Mr. Arthur's own illustration of this incident given a little further on is decidedly humorous.

The music all learnt, the ballet all disciplined and taught, the principals to some extent drilled in the preliminaries of the whole production, a grand " Everybody Call " is made, and the various little armies assemble at what is the most important yet the most tiresome rehearsal of all—for each contingent, it must be remembered, has, until now, been a stranger to each other, and the dovetailing process takes time, trouble, temper and diplomatic attention. Pianos play, carpenters hammer, artists sing over and over to themselves the various " bits " in corners, all in different keys, and, dance occasional steps to themselves to gain proficiency before the band comes.

Then it is all arranged by the master hand, when the band has had its " score " rehearsed, its wrong notes in the parts corrected, when the first " trying on " day of the costumes arrives, and when the blending of the scenic artists' work with the costumiers' best confections—and this produces the scheme of colour—when all these things come about, after much care, worry, and working, all is ready for the curtain to go up and the comedians to be funny—and they very often are.

A good story is told of the late Sir Augustus Harris, who, daily rehearsing

a certain pantomime, only got as far as Scene X for some days, and was unable to get done the particular turn for which he had engaged an eighty-pound-a-week comedian, who had to fill up the time whilst the following Scene XI, the big spectacle, was being set. The comedian complained that he could not work without his "props"—*i.e.*, various properties which are made by the moulder or property man. Harris then threatened to dismiss this workman if the necessary *papier mâché* adjuncts to humour were not there on the morrow. The day, the hour, the scene, arrived—the "properties" were all there, a huge procession of imitation carrots, turnips of Brobdingnagian proportions, a small perambulator, a dummy baby stuffed with sawdust, a watering pot, and a big collection of paraphernalia and impedimenta which completely covered up and hid from sight the humorist; everybody was expectant, the band stopped, a breathless silence, myriads of workers, chorus girls, ballet girls, crowded round, all expecting some great *dénouement* of fun from the £300 worth of the stage manager's handicraft.

Chorus.

"Now," said Harris to the comedian, "have you got all your 'props'?"

"Everything, guv'nor."

"Then," said Sir Augustus, throwing himself back in his usual rehearsing arm-chair, drawing an extra puff at his half-consumed cigar and taking out his watch, and proceeding to count the number of minutes. "*Be funny and make me laugh for twenty minutes.*"

It was a large order. This was the exact amount of time that Harris required to set the scene at the back.

The old top gallery singing patron practically disappeared about eighteen years ago. First, because the demolition of Clare Market and the surrounding district moved him out of the living purlieus of Drury Lane Theatre, which, by-the-by, is in Russell Street and not Drury Lane; and, secondly, because it was then a sixpenny gallery, which the L.C.C. destroyed, and which gave more space to the higher-priced amphitheatre, patronised by a class of theatre-goers who do not sing, chortle, catcall, or "whoop" the music-hall songs, which they now prefer to hum quietly in an apathetic sort of way.

In the old days Boxing Night was a horrid pandemonium of noise, the first two or three scenes of the opening being never heard.

But the gallery vocalist has been replaced by three thousand of L.C.C. little mites who are given a good familiar feast of impromptu melody by the management at the Christmas Eve rehearsal, and the marvellous quickness in which they pick up the various melodies and shout them to my band is a matter for amusement, comment, and reflection. The manner in which the "repertoire" for the children is arrived at is practical but quaint. As a matter of strict accuracy, most of the songs known to the higher-class patrons are unknown to the little ones. The street minstrelsy of Hackney Marshes, Hoxton highways, or Tooting terraces is a totally different thing to the "Yip-Yi-Addy-Ay" of the Gaiety stalls. So I take a census of all the L.C.C. schoolmasters, and ask them what are the favourites of the juvenile mind, and the result is enlightening if not educational. Thus we find that "Boiled Beef and Carrots" is a well-favoured lyric of the juvenile elect; I had never heard of it, but when the band started it last Christmas Eve three thousand stentorian juvenile Carusos shouted it with dynamic force and drowned the not too quiescent brass and drums usually used at the pantomime. Then, again, my musical history knows not "There's No Shop Like the Pawn Shop," nor yet the stirring lilt of "With My Little Wigga-Wagga in My Hand," nor yet "Ginger, You're Balmy," or "We All Came into the World with Nothing," although it's strange to find with what dramatic instinct the "kiddies" can respond to in "Salomè, My Old Girl Salomè," a skit at the time on the Maud Allan craze, or "Out Went the Gas." And yet these were the children's songs of last year. There is one school, however, which I need not mention, that seems to have reformed this peculiar taste in matters musical, because my "official report" gives fifteen specimens of the good old English wholesome "John Bull" style, such as "John Peel," "Hearts of Oak," "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington," and "Here's a Health unto His Majesty." This very healthy old English programme is certainly more likely to appeal to the educational expert than the examples quoted above.

But there it is, the happiness we give the little ones on Christmas Eve, that compensates for all, and, in addition, it is a very good "feeler" as to what pleases the children. They love anything concerned with, or any reference to food. A comedian cramming his mouth and making faces, what time he speaks with his mouth full may be a lesson in very bad manners, but it is always sure of a big laugh; a fight between two funny men as to who owns the latest "gag"—I mean who is to possess the girl—with the punctual interference by the "principal boy" at the right moment separating the combatants, settling the argument by seizing the girl for himself, and generally punching both quarrellers in the stomach, this brings forth a huge volcano of juvenile merriment; and if one of the comedians could be original and say "You've hurt me in my bread-basket," this is sufficient to stop the performance till the other comedian, not to be outdone in topical impromptu replies, "You've hurt me in the Standard Bread-basket." It is a strange thing, but personal pain, injury, and chastisement is always a source of "innocent merriment" to the juvenile mind.

The comic song *pot-pourri* is generally the famous pantomime overture, which, like Wagner's work, is the only composition in "English music"—note the use of inverted commas—which, according to Mr. G. B. Shaw, can make the British playgoer alter his dinner hour. It is the worry and bane of the London hotel manager on Boxing Day, who has to put forward his dinner time a whole hour, as the Boxing first-nighter would sooner miss the whole pantomime rather than the overture. One dramatic critic of honoured reputation boasts of thirty-one consecutive Christmas Eve dress rehearsals; but behind me in the stalls at the next pantomime will sit a gentleman for his

twenty-first consecutive Boxing night at Drury Lane, and for eighteen years he has laid a floral offering and a pair of white kid gloves on the desk for me on arrival. But all the music is not too "comic-song-ey," for, as W. S. Gilbert might have said :

Master Darewski—perhaps just a touch of him.
Elgar—Tchaikowsky—but not very much of him.
Simmer together and throw in a drum,
And a pantomime score is the residuum.

Mr. Herman Darewski for the moment is one of those lucky ones whom Oscar Wilde described as "The Music Poets of the Music-halls," and a very popular composer, too.

The pantomimes used to be written in rhyme in the old Planchè days; this had a delicate fairy-esque aspect which appealed to everybody ; but then the great "pun" provider was popular, and yet, nowadays, "puns" are taboo, although they received in the seventies a favourable imprimatur from no less a writer than Mr. William Archer—of Ibsenite fame—who, writing of this word-twisting in pantomime and parody, said :

We've bores of every sort and size
At large beneath the sun
We talk, and look exceeding wise
And argue and philosophise
And criticise and patronise
And speechify and dun—
But ah ! of all the bores, is he
Who cannot see a pun.

Brave Johnson hated puns—and Sam
Of bores was surely none—
But then his hate was mostly sham
And would have vanished at a drachm
Of wit from Hook, or Hood, or Lamb,
Good punsters every one.
Then fill to these !—and drinking, pray
To Jove that ye as well as they
May make, and see, a pun !

Thus the famous critic on puns.

But the pun died out with H. J. Byron, and the "gag" came in, chiefly because the music-hall artist's "literary" style did not lend itself to the poetic delivery (with the right accent) of verse. When the two music-hall "Robbers" had lost the "Babes in the Wood," they usually rushed on in a front scene with this fine effort of poetry, which they delivered in quaint linguistic unison :

The Babes are lost
This is our chance
To do our popular
Song and Dance.

This is as far as the average memory of the stock music-hall star could be trusted without jeopardising the piece. It soon came to be the orthodox provincial style, which is really much the same at the present day.

But not so at Drury Lane. There we always have the fairy spirit and the Fairy Queen ! Not quite the ancient sort of one. I mean, who "Stirred the Soup," and sang with stolid pluck long songs, because the panorama stuck. Oh, the humour of "The Follies" of this Fairy Queen ! She, like the unsavoury fish humorist, has disappeared ; she never will be missed. Our Fairy Queen is daintiness itself—a rogue in porcelain—a winsome elf, in whose fair doings children take delight. They dream of fairies like this one every night. A child fairy for children. She having found that the music-hall robbers have not quite asphyxiated the "Babes" with their "popular song and dance," sings over them :

Closed are the eyes of the babies twain.
Change will they see when they ope again.
Childhood, too, soon will pass on its way,
Gone like the sun of a summer day.
Life shall to them bring a store of mirth,
Fresh like the dawn of a new born earth,
Fairies shall guard them—in safety keep
Weaving good fortune the while they sleep.

And so on.

In considering the music of the Christmas extravaganza, popular ideas, popular tunes, popular people have not only to be considered ; there are other points not to be passed.

The old-time musical joke is Greek

to the average theatre-goer—the critics laugh, the band laughs—a fatal sign—and the public stops away. Therefore a certain commercial treatment of some scenes is alone possible with varying introductions or parodies or quaint musical juxtapositions which may raise a laugh. To do the "Cavalleria" intermezzo as a hornpipe, the identical melody being played what time the Blondin donkey gyrated on the stage, raised a shout on one famous first night, the only time it was allowed, for the music publisher injuncted me the following morning.

This was something akin to Edward Solomon's "Lost Chord" hornpipe, which so riled the late Sir Arthur Sullivan that, although he wrote to Solomon about it quite nicely, he threatened to injunct the Brigade of Guards in whose barrack burlesque it was played.

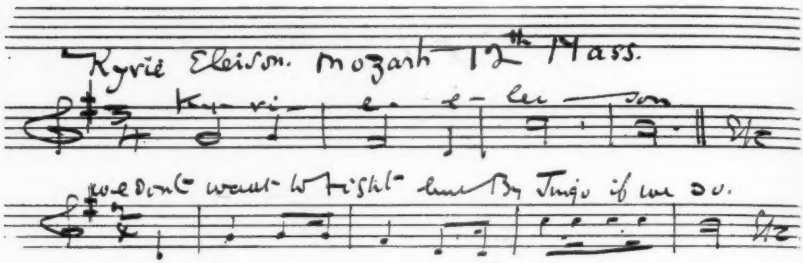
But lots of humour can be got out

"*Jimmy.*"

A caricature by Max Beerbohm.

of the similarity of vulgar tunes and their more serious forebears. Take Mozart's "Twelfth Mass," its "Kyrie Eleison" is merely another form of the great Jingo song, "We Don't Want to Fight."

"Spring Song" to the words of "Put me on an Island" are popular specimens. This latter was, of course, intentional, but even from the oldest times these synchronisations have always been the

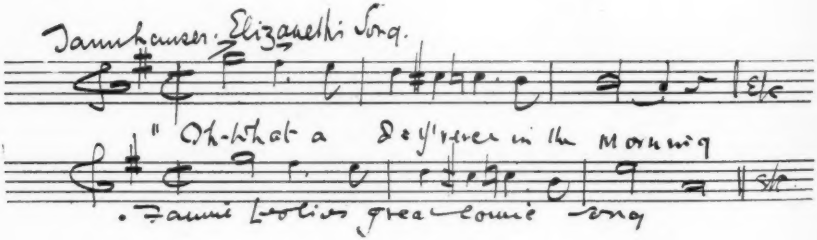


"Sacred and Secular"

I am quoting world-famous tunes and some of the imitations which I have used from time to time.

Then, again, Elizabeth's greeting in Wagner's "Tannhauser" and the popular music-hall song, "Oh, What a Difference in the Morning!"

stock humour of the pantomime composer. Many years ago, when London was flooded with performances of Tschaikowsky's "Pathetic Symphony," I adapted the famous 5/4 movement to a waltz rhythm. It may have



"Opera or Comic?"

All of these, down to the more recent adaptation of Mendelssohn's

been a sacrilege, but it had to be done.

And poor Arthur Sullivan, I am told, sometimes intentionally used well-known excerpts in his Savoy operas with marked effect—for something more than mere coincidence had to be said for the first strain of "Twenty Love-sick Maidens We" in *Patience*, which is note for note "Alas, those Chimes" from *Maritana*, or the Policeman song in *Pirates of Penzance*, note for note the old Liverpool hornpipe, or the *Ruddigore* music, adapted from some bars in "The Lily of Killarney," and "Is Life a Boon" in *The Yeoman of the Guard*, strongly reminiscent of "Come Back to Erin."

But since those happy days the "trick" of introducing some bars of a popular song into a supposedly original composition has become very frequent. It helps the song home much quicker. The Boxing Night audience half-sing the first eight bars, and the second eight of the chorus is intentionally the strain of a popular tune; this they know, and bellow out with true Bank Holiday joyousness—and the singer's fame is made. But great care is taken and much money is often dispensed in staging a pantomime song. The song "The Rose of the Riviera," introduced just casually, cost five hundred pounds to put on, and eighteen pounds a week to carry on. It was made up in this way:

12 special rose costumes at £20 ...	£240
12 special boys' dresses at £5 ...	60
12 special boys' hats at £1	12
12 sets of properties used in the three verses	50
	£362
12 boys' salaries at 30s. a week for twelve weeks	216
	£578

Do the little children ever think of the amount of money which is carefully thought out and expended to gratify their eyes, ears and juvenile demands for prettiness and effect?

The humours of the children behind the scenes for their own improvised amusement are often quaint and often pathetic. They used to have a theatre of their own in the rehearsal-room downstairs. Many weeks of hypocritical love for scenic artists, electricians, and other hard-working folk, ended in their being possessed of the entire scenic output of a small pantomime on their own, with which they amused themselves during the long intervals when they were not required on the scene.

A peevish, snivelling, piping babe accosted by an angry stage manager as to the cause of his grief, to the following query, "What are you, you little devil?" replied, "Please, sir, I'm a whelk, and somebody has taken my shell"—an impromptu reference to the built property dress that the urchin wore in a fish ballet.

And our light-hearted way of doing things does not stop at the music, for after the command performance at Drury Lane last May, when, according to the daily Press, the German Emperor "bowed to Mr. Glover twice" when I conducted my own arrangement of his Imperial composition, "Song and Ægir"—Mr. Arthur Collins altered my photograph so that it looked like, well—see next page.

And again I have presented a random view of three collaborateurs, Mr. A. Collins, myself and Mr. Geo. R. Sims trying to arrange as to how "Hop-o'-my-Thumb" will NOT get lost in the Giant's Seven League Boots.

One Boxing Night in the olden days Flexmore, the clown, thought of a "transformation act" in which he would use a favourite monkey, Pongo by name, which he duly imported to his dressing-room till the famous end-of-the-pantomime-entrance "Here we are again—good morrow, father," the time-honoured salute to our old friend the pantaloon. The clown's first appearance necessitated his leaving his dressing-room earlier than usual, and when the time came for Pongo's assistance he was nowhere to be found. As a matter of fact he had taken advantage of the open dressing-room window and, in his historical imitative way, had seized the stick of wig paste, painted his face after his master's fashion with a bright vermilion, donned the extra pair of clown's "trunks"

which lay carelessly on a chair, and then jumped out of the window to the neighbouring Vinegar Yard, where a ragged urchin shouted "Cats" and introduced one of his eyes to a carefully-poised but very decomposed orange. Pongo, mad with the acid in his optic, ran along the leads to a neighbouring oyster shop, on whose hanging sign he swung for a moment ultimately jumping on to the top of a four-wheeler in which two old ladies were going home to Bedford Square, where he was finally captured.

The old clown as a vocalist is dead, one of the traditions being that he should sing two songs, "Hot Codlins" and "Tippety Witchett"; apart from this he is much the same as of old, and any attempt to improve him would be resented. Harry Payne, famous clown of old Drury, once tried to do a serious pantomime harlequinade on pierrot, harlequin and columbine lines, but it fell flat, and so the old hot poker, the string of sausages and the crushed baby in the perambulator continue to have the changes rung every year.

It used to be a tradition in provincial "Joey-dom" that for his annual benefit the clown should play a serious mime drama entitled "The Dumb Man of Manchester," supposed to be a genuine test of the miming proficiency of the harlequinade king.

Photo] [Foulsham & Banfield.

"Mr. Arthur Collins altered my photograph so that it looked like this."

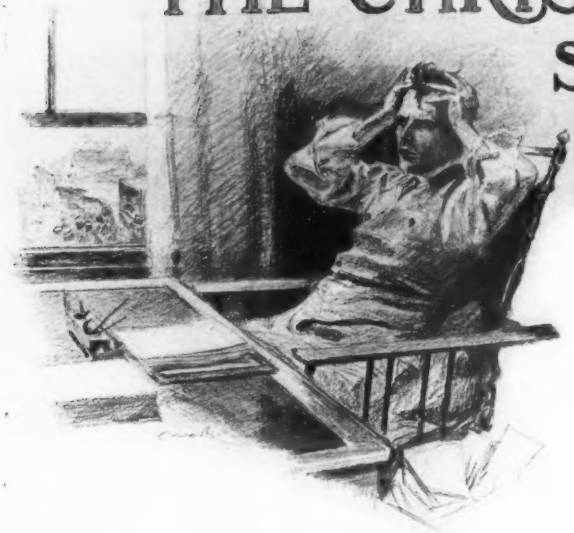
Of course, the pantomime overture is never in fixed overture form. It is merely a *pot-pourri* of the popular airs, and it, too, is tied to a certain irremovable tradition which causes the National Anthem to be followed by "Rule Britannia." This, it is said, arose from the fact that at one time on Boxing Night it was usual to hear a hiss in the gallery when "God Save the

King" was started, and a counter demonstration having arisen, "Rule Britannia" was resorted to as a fitting of the entertainment—except that it is said that after many years the "hissing" man was found to have been

"Rehearsing Drury Lane Pantomime at Terry's Theatre."
(Drawn by Arthur Collins.)

patriotic *finale*, which ended the melodious mixture with rounds of applause for the band and the musical concoctor placed there purposely by the musical director, he adopting this means of getting his overture sensationally received.

THE CHRISTMAS STORY



By
E. W. HORNUNG

ILLUSTRATED BY
ALEC C. BALL.

I.

"Throne Hotel, Harrogate,
"*September 7th*, 1911.

"MY DEAR BRUCE,—The day before yesterday I finished that thing for the Christmas number of the *Vivid*, after nearly a fortnight's hard grind; late last night I destroyed it all but a redeeming bit that may come in for something else. You must make my peace with the *Vivid*, like the good agent and the still better pal that you always are to me. I don't know what they will say at being let in like this at the last moment; but I know what I should have said in their place if another author had traded on his contract to shoot in such stuff as I have been grinding out down here against the grain. It wouldn't have done, Bruce, not at any price *per* thousand words; and I don't mind telling you (or your telling them, if you like) that I wanted their money at least as much as they can possibly have wanted my name or yarn. But there are limits imposed upon the most mercenary of us, not only by the saving vanity of the artisan, but by the lowest and most calculating sort of self-interest. If I had forced this thing upon the *Vivid*, I should not have been able to hold up my head while their Christmas Number was on the stalls, and they would never have given me another contract.

"I wish to goodness I had never accepted this one, or at least that I had not been such a fool as to take on the job in this penitential spot, in the intervals of a cure which most people find quite hard enough work in itself. It doesn't give the cure a chance, while the cure is simply fatal to one's work. I don't mean to inflict a long screed upon you, but you are my only correspondent in these days, and I should like just to give you a sample of them in further extenuation of my breach of treaty.

"At 7.15 I am called from a couch against which I have no complaint to make; but no cup of tea assists me to my legs, and I only get my letters and the papers on my way to the Old Pump Room at eight o'clock. Oh, that Old Pump Room, and the first whiff of it when the wind is the other way! A foul libation of sulphur hot and strong, twenty minutes of one's letters and the band, another deadly draught

and then back to breakfast with what appetite one may. I glower from my solitary table, and think I never saw a body of people who appealed so little to my gregarious instincts; but if they honour me with a thought, I am sure it is quite as unflattering as my impression of them. Indeed, I should expect to suffer heavily from an impartial comparison, for they keep up their spirits but I make no attempt in that direction. I doubt if I have ever been detected smiling in this hotel. I see my neighbours through sulphuric glasses, and they see me under the influence of sulphur, probably conning my programme for the day. This, of course, includes another drink to cut up my morning, and then some highly elaborate bath or skilled man-handling to cut it short an hour before lunch. In the afternoon my doctor would have me take an enormous walk and climb some legendary rocks, which I have not been man enough to find as yet. After tea I am grist for some new mill in the Royal Baths; after dinner I am a dead man, and the thing I tore up last night was a dead man's effort.

"Yet I began with all the will in the world; my very first act, or more correctly my last before the cure began to kill me, was to hire a great brute of a desk and a swivel-chair for my room; on these I was to indite my little masterpiece for the Christmas number of the *Vivid*. But you see what my days have been; let me only add that, in the odd moments I do spend at my hireling desk, first all the coaches and *char-a-bancs* of Harrogate start from under my window for the outlying resorts, compelling me to shut it in spite of the heat, and when they are gone a popular Punch and Judy show gives a daily *matinée* on the green across the road. Five minutes ago a band was playing selections from the 'Pirates of Penzance,' and as I write a sentimental cornet is blurting out 'Killarney' with explosive feeling. Can you wonder that in these conditions I have done a long week's work for the wastepaper basket? I hope the *Vivid* people know that my loss is greater than theirs; they can easily fill my place, but my vain effort is both time and money lost. Also I almost wish that these good folk downstairs knew what a load I have been carrying all these dreary days; then perhaps they might realise how a man may glower and glower, and yet not be quite such a villain as he looks.

"I never meant to let myself go like this, Bruce; it only shows that I really do want to write, if a congenial idea would but come in time. And that's past praying for now, I fear; wasn't it the day after to-morrow that we promised to deliver the MS? I suppose I have a note of that somewhere; but everything except the addled tale itself lies buried beneath the dust of my defeat. I never was more haunted and hunted by anything in all my literary life; the last few days I have been going about like a person in a bad dream, and doing the most absent-minded things. I always was given that way, but I thought I had plumbed my nadir the other morning when I threw my book into the clothes-basket and marched downstairs with my dirty pocket-handkerchief under my arm! Luckily for me, the first person I saw was an old friend who has just turned up at this hotel; she put me right, and I had my first sound laugh since I got here. It is a great thing to strike a friend in a place like this. I believe you once met a soldier man named Vereker, an old school-fellow of mine, at my rooms in town? Well, this is his sister, and we were tremendous pals when I used to stay with him in the holidays a thousand years ago; now she's here with their old father, a decrepit curmudgeon who chains her to his side, but tells me between ourselves that she's engaged to be married. She doesn't mention it herself, or wear a ring, or look the part in the least. I must take her on about it when I get a chance.

"By Jove! I saw her in the road this instant as I looked up from my hired desk. Good-bye, Bruce! I must dash out and post this at once. Remember that you're about my only friend; don't be hard on me for letting you

in with the *Vivid*, and do make my peace with them if you can.

"Yours ever,

"P. A.

"N.B.—I'd have a fresh shot if they could give me another week and I could only get an idea."

II.

"Throne Hotel, Harrogate,

"*September 7th*, 1911.

"DEAR BRUCE,—I do believe I've got it! If so it's a great deal more (or less) than I deserve for one of the rottenest things I ever did in all my days.

"I was just saying I was absent-minded—I mean in the letter I only finished a few minutes ago, though now you'll get this with it—but I've lowered my own record since then. I should say I had even beaten the man who went up to dress for dinner at a country house, never came down, and was found fast asleep in bed with the light out. Did I tell you about him in my last? I know I was beginning to, but I believe I went off about Ruth Vereker instead; it was she who told me the story for my consolation the other morning. But she shall never hear the one I'm going to tell you now.

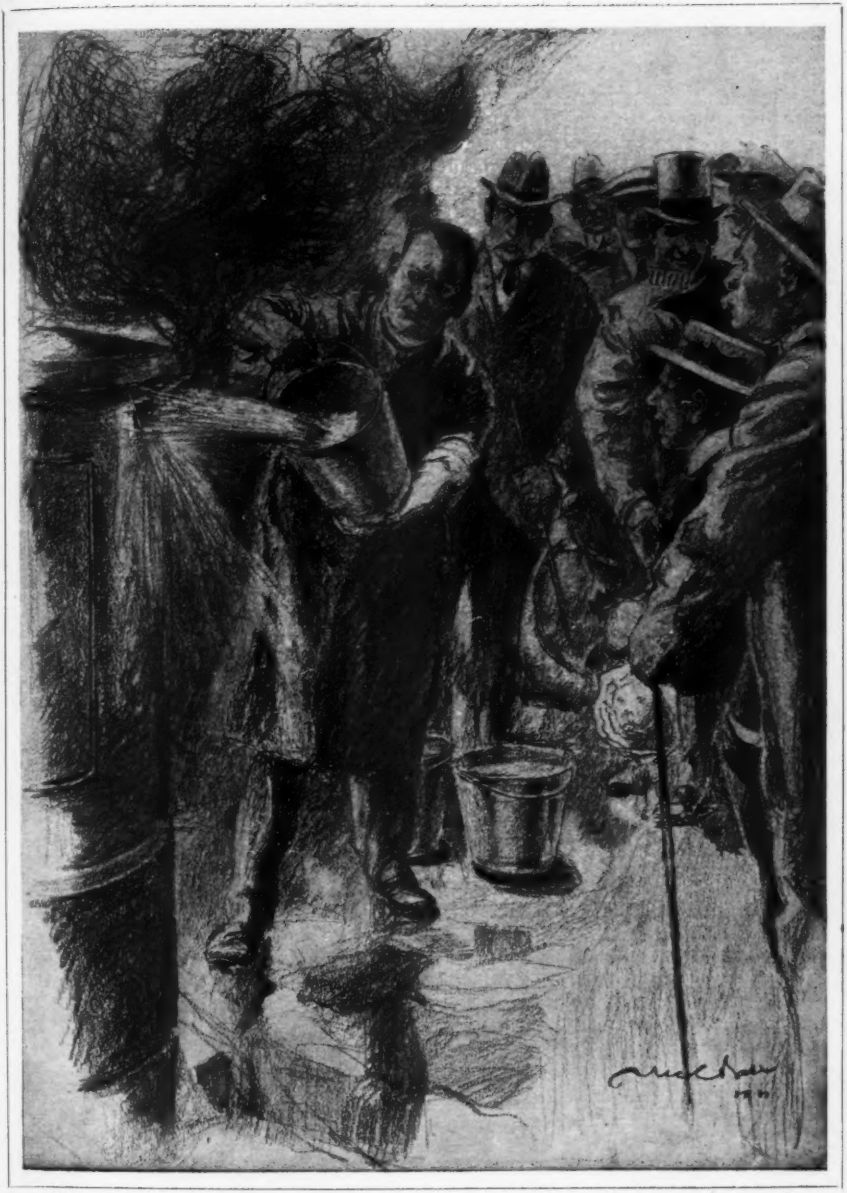
"I dashed down to post your letter—the other one—and I rather thought I should run across Miss Vereker on the way. She was coming along the road when I left my room; but I was fool enough to stop to light a cigarette in the hall, thinking of course that she was on the way in. She cannot have been on her way in, because she never came in, and when I went out I could see nothing of her—anywhere. It was very annoying, because it was a chance of getting her apart from the old man and having a gossip about prehistoric times. However, I had come down to post your letter, and I could have sworn I did post it, in the pillar-box on the edge of the green, just opposite. It was not until I got up here again that I found your letter still in my hand, but no cigarette between my lips! I could not have been more shocked and ashamed if I had caught myself with the letter actually between my teeth!

"Of course, I had posted the infernal lighted cigarette, and no doubt it will burn a hole in an envelope or so. I must be thankful that nobody seems to have seen me do it, for who would believe that one could play such a trick unintentionally? No great harm is likely to be done; it isn't as though I had put in lighted matches; but don't you see the possibilities of the thing? These pillar-boxes must get pretty hot in the sun; that one was, now I think of it; and suppose the things inside got like tinder, suppose some thin envelope—I know it sounds ridiculous, but I think I'll just have a look out and see. . . .

"Bruce! Bruce! How I wish to goodness I could get you here by writing down your name! I shall never be able to tell you in a letter what I've been through since I last laid down my pen. Yet for the sake of practice, and in case you care to submit the idea to the *Vivid* (without giving me away), I mean to try.

"I got up and looked out; the pillar-box is only just over the way, almost absolutely underneath my window; and—smoke was coming out of the slot! It was only just beginning, but in a minute it was quite thick, and in less than half a minute it had been seen by the people down below. An old gentleman saw it first—I was just in time to see the old gentleman. He had come out to post a letter, and he was greeted by a puff of smoke from the pillar-box! He started back as though the thing had sworn at him; and, indeed, it had a grotesquely human look about it that even I could appreciate in my horror. We all know mouths like letter-boxes, but here was a letter-box exactly like a mouth opened wide to blow a satisfactory cloud. Later in the proceedings, when the smoke came fast and furious, lit by leaping flames, it reminded me of a negro I once saw swallowing lighted fusees at the Law Courts end of old Holywell Street.

"Meanwhile the old gentleman had



"The Porter could only dash cans of water at the gaping mouth, and more ran down outside than in."

shouted for help, police, the fire-brigade, and everything else that he could lay his tongue to except a can of water. In a few seconds he had succeeded in collecting a crowd as excited and as helpless as himself. The Punch and Judy show, in the act of starting a fresh performance, lost its entire audience, who, however, were accompanied to the scene by Toby and the actor-manager with the squeaker in his mouth. A motor stopped in passing, and the occupants roared with laughter, without getting out or doing a thing. No policeman appeared ; no policeman have I ever seen (or recognised as such) in happy Harrogate. And there was I looking down upon the grotesque jumble from my upper window—I, the incredibly unwitting author of it all !

" What was I to do ? What would *you* have done ? I started to go down, not to confess my fault, only to hear what they were saying ; but on the stairs it struck me that somebody might have seen me after all, that I might conceivably be recognised as the culprit and denounced *coram populo*. I was not going to run the risk of that. I turned tail and came slinking up again, and here I still am with all the sensations of a hunted criminal. It may be that I shall treat that perennial type with some freshness, the next time I come to handle him.

" In the single minute of my absence the affair had entered on a new phase ; our sturdy little Yorkshire porter had made his appearance with the can of water which had seemed the one thing needful. Yet it is not so easy to pour water into a pillar-box ; the slot slopes the wrong way, and the porter could only dash cans of water at the gaping mouth, and more ran down outside than in. Relays of cans were requisitioned before that pillar-box ceased to belch forth smoke and steam ; and by that time it seemed to me that the fire had practically burnt itself out. At all events, when a postman arrived (I hear they telephoned at last to the post-office from this hotel) the correspondence extracted was a charred litter, so far as I could see from my rather excellent coign of vantage ; some of it fluttered away in black flakes, and I hear that practically everything in the box was destroyed. I have just been down to lunch, and discussed the matter with many to whom I fear I had never even nodded before. But there is nothing like a little excitement for bringing people together ; only I shuddered to think what they would have said or done had they dreamt that the entire conflagration was my handiwork. There was the keenest possible indignation against the author of the outrage, whoever he might be ; I was obliged to join in it to some extent myself, or run the risk of incurring suspicion by my apathy. My old friend Squire Vereker was particularly scandalised and incensed ; he thumped the floor with the stick on which he leans, and said he would give something to see the ruffian flogged within an inch of his life.

" ' That's what we want in these days,' said he : ' the cat, and plenty of it, instead of which there's hardly any. This modern craze of coddling criminals is all confounded nonsense. It breeds 'em, sir ; they thrive and multiply on it. If I wasn't on my last legs I'd like to have the flogging of this hound myself.'

" ' They've got to catch him first,' I suggested, with an unpleasant attack of goose-skin under my clothes.

" ' So they have, sir, and I don't suppose they'll do it. They never seem to me to catch anybody nowadays. I only hope the rascal won't fall in with Ruth ; she's gone off on a long walk by herself—went without her lunch, if you please, and left me to get mine by myself. She might as well be married and done with me.'

" The rascal asked in which direction she had gone, but that the old curmudgeon could not say ; nor has it anything to do with the case, my dear Bruce, though I feel more than ever that she must be having a precious thin time of it with the exacting old gentleman. The point is, however, that here I have a jolly good idea of the very kind I was wanting all along. It would make at least a very much better story than the one I destroyed. That's one reason why I've written it at such length for

your benefit; you might get whole chunks typewritten (again, of course, without giving me away) and try them on the *Vivid*. It's not what they asked for, and they needn't have it if they don't like; but, if they do, let me have all this back and I can work it up in no time. It's simply a question of treatment now.

"What would you say? The more or less innocent criminal is always a fascinating fellow, though I can't profess to handle him like Anstey in 'The Black Poodle,' or Wells in some of his short stories. Still, that sort of thing at due distance. Suppose I *had* gone down into the street, and suppose somebody *had* spotted me as the dastardly offender playing a gratuitously double part? Should I have taken to my heels, and if so in what direction? Far afield in the heroine's passing motor-car, or back into the hotel, up in the lift, and so out upon the roof? The essentially innocent soul, in the grotesquely desperate situation; that's what we want, of course with the right sort of heroine to help him out in the end. Ruth Vereker would be the very one for the job. I would consult her about it, only I don't want her to know I was such an abject idiot, or to think that I wouldn't have owned up if there had seemed any point in it. On the whole I think I'll go and try to find those wonderful rocks my doctor keeps preaching about. I feel like a walk for once, and they might be a very good place for my man to fly to. She would follow him there. But now I think I've given you as much as you can master to-morrow morning if you're going to look after any other fellow's work as well as mine. I shall still let my first letter go on its own, but I'll mark it I., and this one II., so that you may get hold of the right end of the stick first. And then I hope the wrong end won't seem as wrong as it might have been.

"But this time I go to the General Post Office. And I shall only light up on my way to those rocks.

"Yours,

"PHILIP."

III.

"Throne Hotel, Harrogate,

"*September 8th*, 1911.

"DEAR OLD BRUCE,—What wondrous weather we are still having! I have shoved this delightful desk close up to the open window, to see a bit more of what's going on, and really the life and spirit of this place are most exhilarating. The last *char-a-banc* has just departed for the day; if I had not better fish to fry I might have made one of its merry load. The Punch and Judy man is mustering his first audience; it would be too much to say that his squeak attracts me, but I do not resent it as I did. And I have just thrown half-a-crown to a harpist in a flat-brimmed bowler, a fiddler of more than faulty intonation, and a lady vocalist in a feather boa who has been singing me songs of Araby in a way that would indeed have charmed me to a tear this time yesterday. But all's well with Harrogate and me this morning, and really the people in this hotel are as nice a crowd as one could wish to meet in a casual sort of way. You perceive, of course, that I have worked out my new idea to my own satisfaction? Well, I should say I have! I am wrong, however, for it has worked itself out in a fashion that would never have occurred to me in my most deliberately ingenious moments. Fact, my dear fellow, has once more demonstrated its superiority to fiction even of the ultra-Wells or imitation-Anstey type.

"In spite of all the thousands of words I fired at you yesterday, you must bear with another thousand if you want to know the astounding conclusion of the whole matter. But don't you show this lot to the *Vivid*. It is for the private eye of the pal whom I value more than any agent.

"I posted both my other letters, as I told you I should, at the Post Office here while the afternoon of yesterday was still young; then I set off for those wretched rocks of which you have heard so much. You will hear no more of them; they have not seen me yet

I had won through the Valley Gardens, and the encampment of curists listening to the band in their tent-chairs, when on the asphalt slope between the Gardens and the Moor I met Miss Vereker face to face. I was naturally pleased, after the way I had just missed her in the morning; my only trouble was that she was so near home, and rather fidgety about her father, though I was able to assure her that he was all right. She said she must get back to give him his tea after his rest; but I told her I thought he had not retired so soon as usual after lunch, as there had been some little excitement in the hotel owing to a very small fire in the vicinity. I was afraid I was going to be pressed for particulars, but Ruth seemed somewhat full of her own affairs, though I could not help thinking that in a way she was glad to see me. I was naturally delighted to have fallen in with her; and yet she seemed surprised when I importuned her to turn back for the least little stroll on the Moor.

"'But don't you want to think about your story, Phil?'

"'No, thank you! I've torn that story up. I want to forget about it. I'm going to do another one instead, if they'll give me time.'

"'But aren't you almost too conscientious?'

"'Not a bit. It's mere policy not to supply an order with stuff that one knows is bad. Besides, it was making an old man of me, that story. You don't know what it is to tinker and tinker away, and yet to feel at the back of your head that you're doing no good all the time.'

"Ruth had given in, and we were walking now in the direction of the Moor; but we went so far without further speech, and something in her figure and carriage, her colouring and her hair, had spirited me back so many years that I had lost my own thread before she took it up.

"'I'm glad it was only that,' she said.

"'What do you mean?'

"'You didn't seem the least bit glad to see us again. I thought you'd forgotten us at first.'

"'Forgotten you!' I cried. 'That only shows what a beast that infernal story was making of me. My wretched work always does drive me to one extreme or the other; if it had been going well you'd have heard about nothing else, and found me the most awful bore.'

"'I don't think I should. I haven't had so many opportunities of hearing you talk about your work. It's about a hundred years since we met.'

"'I shouldn't have forgotten you if it were a thousand. Besides, I heard all about you from Dick last time he was home from India. Do you remember the first time I came to stay with him in the holidays?'

"'I've got the verses you sent me afterwards about everything we'd done.'

"'You haven't! I remember having an awful row with Dick because I would always go about with you.'

"'Do you remember the day we hid from him in the loft?'

"'Rather! Poor old Dick! I didn't quite play the game by him. But it all seems like yesterday.'

"And it really did, Bruce, for we had been the most tremendous pals in our early days, and for years afterwards, until her brother went to India; but since then we have hardly ever met until this time. Yet it all came back, here on the Moor; we called up memory against memory, and laugh for laugh, exactly as though it were a game; and all the years since the end of those days seemed to drop out of our lives, or mine at least, and give me back my youth. You may say I flatter and deceive myself; you may say what you like! I never felt a younger man than yesterday afternoon, and I never sat beside a younger woman than Ruth Vereker, with her wonderful colouring and her gold-brown hair, as crisp and bonny as the day she put it up.

"I must tell you that this so-called Moor is a sort of miniature heath, only planted with tiny clumps of trees as well; and we sat under one, on a seat thoughtfully provided by the local corporation, and as carefully covered with the names and initials of local louts. It wasn't in the least secluded or roman-

tic; a train runs close at hand, cars hoot nearer still, nurses and children with harsh Yorkshire accents lurk behind every bush if they are not blend of Venice and Vallombrosa as seen between a neighbouring clump of birches and a more distant ridge of pines.

"I never sat beside a younger woman than Ruth Vereker, as crisp and bonny as the day she put it up. ... with her wonderful colouring and her gold-brown hair, Why on earth did you get engaged, Ruth?'"

actually sitting beside you. We had our seat to ourselves; so far we were fortunate; and a hideous reservoir, with a row of raw villas inverted in its glassy depths, might have been a magic

"It was with a kind of thud that we came back to Harrogate and 1911.

"'Why on earth did you get engaged, Ruth?'

"Was it that her colouring gained

in brilliance, or merely that the afternoon sun swept the cheek nearer mine?

"'Who told you I was engaged?' she asked.

"'Your father. Isn't it true?'

"'Only just.'

"'Only just!' I echoed. 'It must be one thing or the other, Ruth?'

"'Then it's true enough, I suppose,' she said. 'I—I couldn't keep him waiting any longer—and now I've done it!'

"She looked adorably unhappy about it all.

"'When did you do it?' I demanded.

"'Only this morning,' she sighed.

"'What?' I cried. 'Is the fellow here in Harrogate?'

"She shook her head.

"'Then where is he, and who is he, Ruth? Is he an old friend,' I asked, jealously, 'who can talk over old days as well as I can? If so, I may remember him,' I had the wit to say hastily.

"'He is an old friend,' she answered, 'but of course not in the sense that you are, Phil. We weren't children together. He lives abroad, and I sent him his answer this morning.'

"I leapt to my legs.

"'You posted it?'

"'Yes.'

"'About twelve o'clock—opposite the hotel?'

"'Yes,' she whispered. 'It's done!'

"'It isn't!' I cried. 'Your letter never went; it was destroyed, with everything else that was in that pillar-box at that time; didn't I tell you there had been a fire? That was the one I meant, and—and it *isn't* done Ruth—and it never shall be!'

"That, my dear Bruce, is the end of the story I began to tell you yesterday, little dreaming what the end was to be. This much I owe you, and have leave to tell *you* word for word. The rest is silence, until you come down and see her for yourself. But you will plainly see that I cannot give it to the *Vivid* after all—unless—but to-morrow is Saturday, and a fine train leaves St. Pancras at 11.30. Come!

"PHIL."

THE BUILDER.

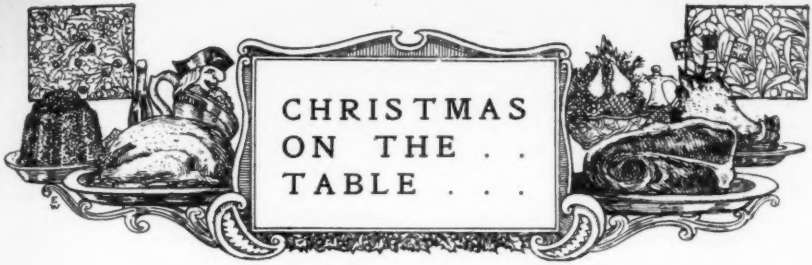
HOPE built a castle. She was always building,
This foolish Hope—nor reckèd she one whit
Whether of sand or cloud she builded it.

It always fell, for either sullen Care,
Despair, or chilling Apathy passed by
Or Age breathed on it with his frosty sigh.

She built one last of precious flawless stone
For Love alone, and happy Love dwelt there
And cast out Age and Apathy and Care.

Love dwelt therein—but wingèd Hope fled on;
Then looking up, bereft, with streaming eyes,
Love saw her building still: but in the skies.

FANNY MARY MARSDEN.



BY FRANK SCHLOESSER.

ALTHOUGH it is common belief that Christmas comes but once a year, it is easily demonstrable that a good sirloin of beef, a well-made plum-pudding, and, best of all, a chestnut-stuffed turkey, are never out of place, and make themselves as welcome on a day in January as on any specified—and hallowed—day in December.

Still, Christmas is Christmas, whatever the weather may be, and the thoughts of the housekeeper (housekeeper in the best sense—one who is "house-proud") naturally turn to the traditional dishes of the day.

They are three, or, at the utmost, four in number—roast beef, turkey, plum-pudding, and, perhaps, "boar's head and mustard." This last is commemorated in a verse which concentrates its usefulness in five short lines:

Sweet rosemary and bays around it spread;
His foaming tusks with some large pippin graced,
Or 'midst those thundering spears an orange placed;
Sauce, like himself offensive whispers,
The roguish mustard, dangerous to the nose.

The household books of Sir William Fairfax, reproduced by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, throw a light on the Christmas customs of the sixteenth century. This, for instance, was the bill of fare for Christmas Day, 1572. For breakfast there was brawn and mustard, beef and beer for the master, and beef and beer for the yeomen. At dinner-time there was for "my master" a first course of brawn and mustard (rather monotonous diet), frumenty, boiled mallards, boiled knuckles of veal, nimble pies (probably numble or umble), peascods, a roast chine of beef, roast veal, roast swan, roast turkey, roast pig, cold crane pie, roast capon, and baked venison. The second course was "gillye," roast conies, roast mallards, roast teals, one roast partridge (probably for a privileged and delicate lady), roast woodcock, and a tart.

Of course, there was a deal too much of that fine confused feeding which was thought to be the inevitable and appropriate accompaniment to the festive time. But protests have never been lacking. Only a very few years ago the Vicar of Burtonwood wrote a strong article in his parish magazine on "Gormandising at Christmas," in the course of which he says: "Christians should have only one altar—the altar of love. At present they happen to have several. Christmas customs and festivities cannot fail to convince the most prejudiced that 'the kitchen' heads the list of popular altars. After a day of much eating, of persistent cramming, of coaxing, pampering, and forcing the appetite, the mood of Christmas evening and night is hardly spiritual. The victims of 'human carnivoracity' are dull, heavy, stupid, 'dozey.'"

These are brave strong words (except "carnivoracity," which is a vile concoction, and not to be found in any dictionary), but justifiable in so far as gluttony and Christmastide being too often interchangeable terms. But there is no sound reason, gastronomic, festive, or digestive, for overeating at Yuletide more than at any other time of the year. "Good cheer" never means stomach-ache; and it is as easy to be judiciously moderate over turkey and plum-pudding as over any other good things of this world.

In Burgundy, at Christmas-time,

while the Yule log is burning, and the family, seated about, sing Christmas carols, the youngest child is sent into the corner to pray that the Yule log may bear him some sugar plums. Meanwhile, little parcels of them are placed under each end of the log, and the children come and pick them up, believing in good faith that the great log has borne them.

Herrick, in his "Hesperides," has a quaint reference to Christmas pie, the forerunner of Christmas plum-pudding :

Come guard this night the Christmas pie
That the thiefe, though n'er so slie,
With his flesh hooks don't come nie
To catch it ;

From him, who all alone sits there,
Having his eyes still in his eare,
And a deale of nightly feare
To watch it.

The composition of a Christmas pie, according to a learned work published in 1698, included "neats' tongues, the brawn of a chicken, eggs, sugar, currants, citron, orange peel, and various sorts of spice." About seventy years earlier than the above date, Scogin, in his "Jests," makes a death-bed speech :

"Masters, I tell you all that stand about mee, if I might live to eate a Christmasse pye, I care not if I dye by and by after, for Christmasse pyes be good meat."

It may be remembered that one Jack Horner, of poetic memory, was concerned with a Christmas pie, and the verse immortalising him has been neatly Latinised :

Inquit, et unum extrehens prunum
Horner, quam fueris nobile pueris,
Exemplar imitabile !

Another useful reference to Christmas pie occurs in "Poor Robin's Almanack" for 1740 :

Burnt brandy very good I hold,
To keep in heat and force out cold ;
And if you choose to drink it raw,
Mix sugar, which it down will draw.
When men together there do flounce,
They call the liquor cherry-bounce ;
Yet no more difference in them lies,
Than between minced and Christmas pies.

The following account of a Christmas pie is taken from the *Newcastle Chronicle* of January 6th, 1770. "Monday last, was brought from Howick to Berwick, to be shipped for London, for Sir Henry Grey, Bart., a pie, the contents whereof are as follows : viz., 2 bushels of flour, 20 lbs. of butter, 4 geese, 2 turkeys, 2 rabbits, 4 wild ducks, 2 woodcocks, 6 snipes, and 4 partridges ; 2 neats' tongues, 2 curlews, 7 blackbirds, and six pigeons ; it is supposed to be a very great curiosity ; was made by Mrs. Dorothy Patterson, housekeeper at Howick. It was near 9 feet in circumference at bottom ; weighs about 12 stone, will take two men to present it to table ; it is neatly fitted with a case and four small wheels to facilitate its use to every guest that inclines to partake of its contents at table."

This must have been a very sound piece of work, and Mrs. Patterson ought to have a monument. Perhaps she had—in the pie.

Poetic allusions to Christmas cheer teem throughout the literature of the past four or five centuries. In Scott's "Marmion" one finds :

England was Merry England when
Old Christmas brought its sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale,
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale.
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.

And years and years before that, good old Robert Tusser wrote (about 1550) :

At Christmas play, and make good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year.

There is an old Christmas song, of which it seems impossible to trace the origin, which runs thus :

Come, help me to raise
Loud songs to the praise
Of good old English pleasures ;
To the Christmas cheer,
And the foaming beer,
And the buttery's solid treasures.

To the stout sirloin
And the rich spiced wine,
And the boar's head grimly staring ;
To the frumenty
And the hot mince-pie
Which all folks were for sharing.

To the holly and bay
In their green array
Spread over the walls and dishes ;
To the swinging sup
Of the wassail-cup
With its toasted healths and wishes.

A never-failing resource for quotation is, of course, Dickens's "Christmas Carol." For instance:

"In half a minute, Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top."

One Weeks, of the Bush Hotel, Bristol, was, at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, a noted Christmas caterer. The bill of fare for Christmas, 1800, was as follows: A turtle of 120 lbs., 72 pots of turtle, a bustard, red game, black game, fish of almost innumerable kinds, venison, 42 hares, 87 wild ducks, 17 pheasants, 41 partridges, 17 wild geese, 149 snipe, 81 woodcocks, 17 wild turkeys, 44 tame turkeys, 10 capons, and 52 barrels of Purfleet oysters.

There is no record as to how many guests partook of this truly Gargantuan feast, but it is abundantly evident that mine host Weeks, who by report was a veritable Boniface of the old school, understood the requirements of the Bristol appetite of one hundred and eleven years ago.

A banquet (it deserves to be called nothing less), rather cleverly designed for Christmas, was given three years ago at Tunbridge Wells Hotel, which makes very pleasant, if slightly unetymological, reading.

CHRISTMASSE, 1908.

YE BILL OF YE FAYRE.

In plaine Englyshe Termes, without any Cloake offe French or other Foreygne Tonge, for ye comfort offe alle.

Ye Dinner will be serven after ye mannere of ye Russyen people; ye Guests are bidden to ete after ye hungarie mannere.

"Now we praie you, Masteres, alle bee merriee."—*Chaucer.*

Mastere Willats, Manciple of ye Hostelerie.

YE SOUPE.

Cleere, made from ye Turtle of ye Island of Jamaica, and ye Thicke of ye Tayle of ye Prize Ox.

YE FYSSHE.

Ye mightie Turbot from ye Depths of ye Englyshe Channele; also ye lyttle fysshes, yclept Whitebait, eaten by manie in ye Olde Towne of Greenwyche, Kente.

YE LIGHT FOODS.

Ye tastie Veal in Toothsome Paste, and ye Compote made from ye tendere Chickens, serven hotte.

YE ANCIENTE BOAR'S HEAD FROM YE BROADE-WATER FORESTE.

YE SOLID FAYRE.

Ye olde Baronne of ye Famous Prize Ox of ye Grande Show, serven with manie Vegetables.

YE WINGED BIRDS.

Ye Monarche Turkie, accompanied with ye Goose and serven with ye Sauces various.

YE SWETES.

Ye Plumme Puddinge of Olde Englande and ye Mince Pies, serven hotte; together with other tastefulle dishes.

YE DESERTE.

Divers Fruits, which are your Desertes.

COFFEE.

It is very helpful to know that such an immaculate authority as the *Lancet* is decidedly in favour of the conventional Christmas dinner. It not only approves of it, but even declares that it is "most wholesome." Praise from Sir Hubert, indeed, is nothing, gastronomically considered, compared with praise from No. 1 Bedford Street.

"Roast beef or turkey and plum-pudding represent in plain terms the constituents of what is from a physiological point of view a complete diet presenting all classes of nutrition. The plum-pudding in particular is a complete food in itself, and the only risk of the Christmas meal is taking an excess of the good things which it provides."

Fortunately, people nowadays do not need to be told to guard against excess. Life has become a strenuous affair, and all know that to trifle with the nutritive processes is to be left behind in the race.

Moreover, there is not a single item in Christmas cheer which need be taboo to the most rigid of physiologists, when there is no abuse of the good things of the feast. This is good hearing, and should be consolatory to those who still believe in the merits of good old-fashioned English food, as against the growing cohort of unhealthy looking food-faddists.

THE GARDEN OF MY SOUL.

BY LOUISE JOPLING ROWE.

CHRIST in the Garden of my Soul,
Walked with me, hand in hand.
The flaming Poppies tossed their heads,
And glorified the Land.

Yet Christ said : " Why these gaudy flowers
Flaunting their varied hues ?
They tell of Prejudice and Pride,
Of stubborn wilful views."

For Lilies then we vainly sought,
Few in that Garden grew ;
" Their day was over," so folks said,
The old gives place to new.

" This poison plant of Envy's growth,
That ripens in the shade,
See, what a dark and hideous shape
Upon the ground is laid.

" And all these rank and bitter weeds,
That choke the fair flower's growth,
Ah ! Daughter ! " sadly did He speak,
" These are the fruits of sloth ! "

And to the farthest end we came,
Upon a barren plot
Where sunrays rioted all day,
A sweet and lovely spot.

" Is nothing planted here ? " Christ said,
" Does this good ground go waste ?
Ah ! shameless Daughter, fetch your tools,
And till it in all haste ! "

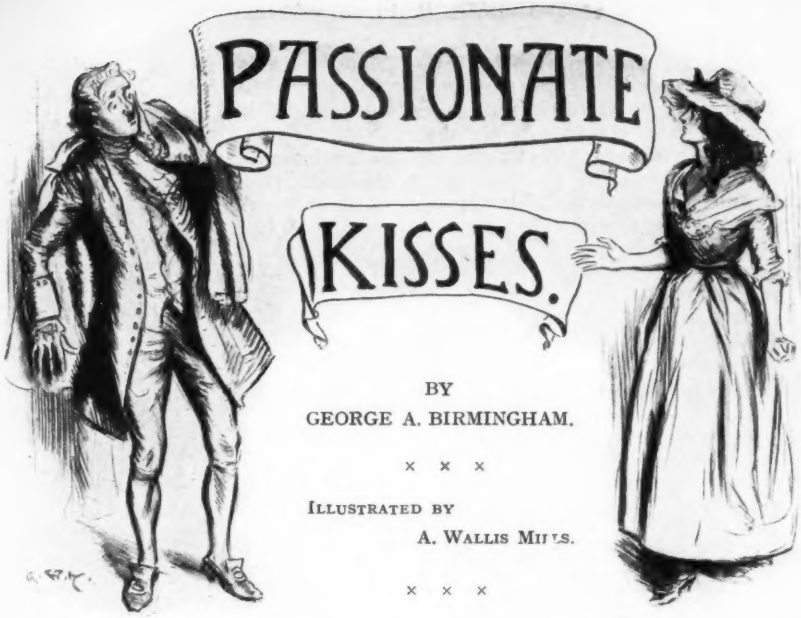
And pale, and sad, I wandered on,
Beside the Master's side.
I looked upon my Garden fair,
With now no glance of pride.

Then in a corner Christ espied,
A pure white Rose of Love,
The splendour of its radiance shone
All other flowers above.

And from its breast a perfume stole,
A fragrance sweet and chaste,
" Ah ! but for this," Christ smiling spake,
" Your Paradise were waste ! "

Then in the Garden of my Soul,
The Birds sang loud and strong,
And happiness and joy awoke,
In answer to their song.

For Christ had found the flower of Love,
What mattered all beside ?
Greater than this no other is,
For Love Christ lived and died !



BY
GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM.

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ILLUSTRATED BY
A. WALLIS MILLS.

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LISNALLY is a small and inconvenient town, but the neighbourhood is counted an agreeable one. Nowhere else in Ireland are there so many retired military officers. We are not very well off, but we are most friendly and sociable. In summer we have a tennis club. In winter we meet at each other's houses to play bridge. We possess, both in summer and in winter, fairly good golf links. The place has been unkindly described as a hotbed of gossip. I prefer to say that we are all friendly with our neighbours, and, as friends should, take a deep interest in each other's affairs. When old Colonel Miles's boy passed into Sandhurst I was as pleased as he was, and told the news to everyone I met. When Jack Rodgers, the rector's only son, took first honours in some college examination, old Miles, who was the first to hear of it, called on me and half a dozen other people to tell us, and we were all in a position to congratulate the rector when we met him. I do not call that kind of thing gossip.

Lisnally Castle, the only large house in the neighbourhood, stood empty for years, because Lord Lisnally, who owned it, lived abroad. Last November it was taken by Mrs. Lowe—the Honourable Mrs. Edward Lowe. We all knew something about her beforehand, for her name appears frequently in the fashionable intelligence of the London papers. She is a widow, and very well off. Her tastes, so we gathered from the newspapers, were theatrical, and we all hoped that she would get up something in the way of a play for our benefit during the winter.

I called on her directly after she arrived, and she told me that she intended to do something to brighten us all up. She was as good as her word. Never before or since did Lisnally enjoy so splendid a sensation as that which Mrs. Lowe's New Year party provided.

Early in December she proposed that we should get up amateur theatricals. I told her that I was too old to take a part, but I offered to act as stage manager. Mrs. Lowe said she intended to be stage manager herself, but that she would be glad of my help in selecting the caste.

"Your local knowledge, Major," she

said, "and your tact will be invaluable."

They were. I was sorry sometimes, before we were through with the business, that I had so much local knowledge and tact. There were a great many difficulties, and Mrs. Lowe always fell back on me to surmount them.

"She threw her two arms round the rector's neck and smacked her lips."

Our principal lady was Miss Minnie Rodgers, the rector's eldest daughter. She was a very pretty girl, and had acted several times at school in speech day plays. We had no hesitation about selecting her, and she accepted the part with alacrity. Our troubles began when we came to choose the leading gentleman. There were three candidates for the part of Minnie's lover. The police officer, Mr. Gunning, put in a strong claim. He said it was the only part he could play really well. The villain, he assured us, was out of the question for him on account of his profession. As a police officer he could not possibly compromise himself by representing a man whom he might in real life be called upon to arrest. He firmly refused to be Minnie's father, because he did not want to shave off his moustache. George Miles, old Colonel Miles's eldest son, who was at home for a holiday, said that he wanted the part.

"Gunning," he said, "is far too old

for a lover. The hero of the piece ought to be a man in the prime of life."

Gunning looks about thirty ; George Miles is just nineteen.

The rector read the play as a sort of censor, and told me that he made a point of the lover's part being given to his own son. Minnie, as he pointed out, had to be kissed several times in the last act by her lover, and it would be very embarrassing to the girl if this were done by anyone except her own brother. Mrs. Lowe asked me to settle the matter without hurting anybody's feelings. She said that she did not really care who had the part, but that George Miles was by far the best suited for it, and that the play would probably be a complete failure if anyone else were chosen.

"'I'm frightfully sorry, Major,' said Gunning."

"Whoever it is," she said, "will have to wear knee breeches and silk stockings, and you know what Mr. Gunning's legs are like—walking-sticks, my dear Major, emaciated walking-sticks. As for that Rodgers boy, he's shaggy."

I saw Mrs. Lowe's point. Jack Rodgers is a little unkempt. He also has an awkward way of walking. But the rector's opinion weighed with me. I did not like the idea of subjecting a pretty girl to the passionate kisses—"passionate" is in the stage directions—of a strange young man for a long series of rehearsals. I decided in my own mind that Jack Rodgers must have the part. Unfortunately, Minnie herself preferred Gunning. I do not know how she managed it, but she talked Mrs. Lowe into agreeing with her. Gunning confessed to me afterwards that he had promised to pad the calves of his legs with cotton wool.

The rector called on me when he heard that the matter was settled, and said that the passionate kisses must be left out. I took him up to Lisnally Castle, and laid his proposal before Mrs. Lowe. She simply scouted it.

"My dear rector," she said, "don't be absurd. He won't really kiss her. He'll only smack his lips somewhere near the back of her head, standing between her and the audience. Look here——"

She threw her two arms round the rector's neck and smacked her lips.

"You can't call that kissing," she said, "can you ?"

The rector, who is also a canon, got extremely red in the face. He

straightened his collar and the lappets of his coat.

"Of course," he said, "if there's nothing worse than that——"

Mrs. Lowe picked him up before he had finished his sentence.

"Worse than that!" she said. "Worse! You're not very complimentary to me."

The rector made no real attempt at an apology. We left the house together, and he told me that he would not allow Minnie to act in the play. I was not much frightened by the threat. Minnie is a young woman of great determination.

Various other difficulties arose as the rehearsals went on. Every individual member of the company, except Minnie and Mr. Gunning, got angry about something at least once, most of them three or four times. My hair was noticeably greyer, and there was a great deal less of it, when we reached the dress rehearsal on New Year's Eve. Then, I am bound to say, our troubles seemed to be over. The play went swimmingly for the first two acts. Mrs. Lowe was purring with delight, and I found myself patting the actors on the back and expressing my satisfaction in a series of most extravagant compliments. I can honestly say that when the curtain rose for the third act, I did not feel the smallest trace of nervousness.

Mrs. Lowe was still purring when the crisis of the whole play arrived. Mr. Gunning, his legs most beautifully puffy, was on his knees before Minnie, and his pink satin breeches had stood the strain of the attitude. He poured out his declaration of devotion in the best possible style. Minnie turned her head aside coyly, just as Mrs. Lowe had taught her, and felt about with her left hand until she grasped Gunning's shoulder. Then he rose, flung his arms round her, and the passionate kisses began, as directed. Instead of letting her head fall languidly back and gazing up into Gunning's eyes, as Mrs. Lowe had arranged, and as had been done at every rehearsal, Minnie suddenly sprang back and smacked Gunning's face with tremendous force.

"How dare you?" she said.

Then before anyone could interfere she smacked his face again. Mrs. Lowe and I rushed forward. The rector, who had been given a seat in front by special permission, tried to climb across the footlights. We seized Minnie and dragged her off the stage. Even Gunning's cheek—she had chosen the same one for both smacks—was not redder than hers were.

"How dared he?" she said.

"What did he do?" said Mrs. Lowe.

"It," said Minnie. "Really, not only pretending."

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, "that Mr. Gunning actually——"

"My cheek," said Minnie, "and then—then my mouth. Oh!"

We got her into the dressing-room, and then Mrs. Lowe signed to me to go away. I was extremely glad to do so. Minnie was laughing in a convulsive way. I had faced most of the difficulties which naturally arise out of private theatricals, but I felt unequal to the hysterics of the leading lady. When I reached the stage I found young Miles and Jack Rodgers standing together in a corner. I was not interested in them, but I could not help hearing Miles calling some one, presumably Gunning, an infernal cad. Rodgers appeared to be trying to moderate Miles's passion. He said something about not making a scene, and added the word "here" in sinister tones. He was doing the villain in the piece, and had practised speaking in that kind of way so much that it came quite natural to him. Gunning was standing by himself at the far side of the stage. As I approached him I saw that he was fumbling with the hilt of his sword. I thought for a moment that he had gone suddenly mad and intended to kill me, but his play with the sword must have been pure nervousness. What he actually did was apologise.

"I'm frightfully sorry, Major," he said. "I give you my word of honour that I didn't mean to. It came over me quite suddenly, and I couldn't help it."

"You'd better go home at once," I

"The whole audience rose and cheered"

said. "If you were drunk there would be some excuse for you; but as things stand, the only proper thing for you is to apply to-morrow for a transfer to some other district and not show your face in public till you get it. The theatricals, of course, can't come off now. They're utterly ruined."

Gunning did not say another word. He was so much ashamed of himself that he did not even attempt to change his clothes. He sneaked out of the house just as he was, in pink satin breeches and silk stockings. Young Miles and Jack Rodgers did not wait to change their clothes either. They left shortly after Gunning did.

I had no particular wish to meet the rector, who would certainly attack me as soon as he had finished comforting Minnie. The remaining members of the company gathered round me and were babbling madly, asking questions which I could not answer. I thought that the best, certainly the most agreeable, thing for me to do was to go home. I got my overcoat and slipped away.

It was very fortunate indeed that I did so. Near the bottom of the avenue I came upon Miles, Rodgers, and Gunning. They were fighting. Gunning had his back to a clump of laurel-trees, and was putting up a pretty good defence, considering that his opponents were two to one. I shouted to them to stop at once. Miles, who is at Sandhurst and has some idea of discipline, obeyed me. Gunning looked round to see who I was. Rodgers, who all through the rehearsals had shown a contempt for my authority, seized his opportunity and knocked Gunning down. The laurel-bushes broke his fall, but the blow was a nasty one. Miles appealed to me.

"Let's thrash him, Major," he said. "He deserves it."

I could not deny that he did, but I happen to be a man of some position and a magistrate. It was impossible for me to stand by and watch with approval an aggravated assault upon a police officer. I do not know that the law takes a specially severe view of the battery of a policeman, but I imagine that it would be much more difficult to hush up a case of the kind than it would be if the victim were some unofficial person. I took Miles and Rodgers each by an arm and led them from the field of battle. They came with me without resistance, but they kept binding themselves by frightful oaths not to rest until they were savagely revenged on Gunning. Miles, I recollect, had a plan for inducing the police officer to accompany him to France, and there forcing him to fight a duel with revolvers. Rodgers favoured simpler forms of brutality. "Mash him up," was one of the phrases he used, and I understood that his football boots were to be the chosen instruments.

I conducted these two young men to their homes and bound them over to attempt no further violence until the next morning. Then I went to my own house and settled down to a cigar, which I needed badly.

At ten o'clock a mounted messenger galloped up to my door. In stories which deal with love and duelling mounted messengers always gallop; in real life they usually trot. But this one did actually gallop. He was one of the grooms from Lisnally Castle, and Mrs. Lowe, so he told me, had ordered him to gallop. She has a very strongly developed taste for the theatrical. I went to the door myself, and the man handed me a note with the information that no answer was required. It was, of course, from Mrs. Lowe.

"Dear Major," she wrote, "It's all right. I've settled the whole affair in the most satisfactory possible way. The play will come off to-morrow night and will be a flaming success."

I did not see how Mrs. Lowe could possibly have settled the matter. She might have pacified Minnie. She might, though it seemed very unlikely, have talked the rector into a mood of Christian forgiveness towards Gunning. But she could not have known anything about the battle which had been fought on her avenue. Miles and Rodgers would certainly not act on the same stage with Gunning. Their feelings were too bitter to be concealed,

and Gunning himself could scarcely appear with a black eye. I was quite sure that his eye would be black after the way Rodgers hit him. Besides, no man with any self-respect could be expected to fling his arms round the neck of a girl who had smacked his face twice in public. Mrs. Lowe was oversanguine. Her note did not cheer me up in the least.

At half-past ten the rector knocked at my door. He looked shaken and extremely nervous. I felt sorry for the poor man, so I went downstairs and got a bottle of champagne. I make a point of keeping a dozen bottles or so in the house, though I cannot afford to drink the wine except on great occasions. The rector is usually a teetotaler, but he drank half that bottle, and would have drunk more if I had not stopped him. Things were bad enough without any additional scandal, and there would have been additional scandal of a very serious kind if the rector had gone staggering home from my house at midnight. I got his story out of him bit by bit. It appeared that Minnie had been most unreasonable, had raged against everyone, and had blamed Mrs. Lowe and me for making a scene. The rector said, and I quite agreed with him, that it was Minnie herself who had made the scene. If she objected to scenes she ought not to have smacked Gunning's face. Nothing the rector or Mrs. Lowe could do was any use. Minnie simply became more outrageous when they reasoned with her. Then Gunning arrived at the house and asked to be allowed to see Minnie. The rector, of course, refused permission, but he went out to the hall himself and had an interview with Gunning. That unfortunate young man was in a horrid condition. His eye was swelling rapidly. A kind of cloak which he wore, made of thin silk, was in rags. The padding of the calves of his legs had somehow slipped down and made his ankles look as if they were enormously swollen. The rector thought at first that he had sprained them both badly, and wondered how he managed to walk. Gunning said he wanted to apologise to Minnie, but the rector cut him short, and told him to go home at once and never to dare to go near Minnie again. Gunning went after that, slowly, like a man in deep distress.

The rector went back to the dressing-room and told Mrs. Lowe what he had seen, speaking in a whisper. Minnie, of course, heard all he said, although she was supposed to be insensible at the time. The moment the rector mentioned Gunning's eye she jumped up and ran out of the room.

The rector and Mrs. Lowe stood staring at each other, wondering what they ought to do. In the end they both went to look for Minnie. They tried various rooms, and came back at last to the hall. There Minnie met them. She came in through the front door, leading Gunning with her, and announced that she and he were engaged to be married.

"I don't like it," said the rector. "I don't like it at all."

"But you can't help it," I said.

"As far as I can make out there has been an understanding between them for some time back, not a regular engagement, but a sort of mutual understanding."

"Then why did Minnie object so violently when——?"

"It was only an understanding," said the rector. "They hadn't gone to those extremes."

"Still—any understanding must have led her to expect——"

"I didn't like to cross-question her, but I imagine she didn't think anything of the sort would have happened just then."

"It was rather public," I said.

The theatricals went on and were a great success, though the last act of the play was not finished on the night of the performance. I spent most of the day arguing with Miles and Rodgers. It was all I could do to persuade them to act. I succeeded in the end only by representing Minnie's original understanding with Gunning as something much more definite than it actually was. Young Miles gave in sulkily.

"Of course," he said, "if a fellow was engaged to a girl, or even engaged

to be engaged, he has a perfect right to —you know the sort of thing I mean. But what I want to say is, that if a fellow is, then other fellows ought to be told. It's an utterly rotten thing not to, and I should call it bad form."

Jack Rodgers took a different line. Once he grasped the fact of the understanding, he exonerated Gunning completely, and laid the whole blame on Minnie.

"I've always known," he said, "that she was a deceitful beast. If she didn't like Gunning kissing her, she ought not to have got engaged to him. If she did like it—though why he wanted to do it I can't imagine—she oughtn't to have smacked his face. But that's Minnie all over."

I think it is logic in which Jack Rodgers takes honours at college.

The company played to an audience excited to the highest possible pitch. Mrs. Lowe had collected about a hundred and fifty people into the long gallery at Lisnally Castle, and I am sure that every single one of them had heard an erroneous version of the story of Minnie's engagement. When we reached the great scene in the third act there was an absolutely breathless silence. When Gunning—dreadfully disfigured by the condition of his eye—flung his arms round Minnie's neck and followed the stage direction, the whole audience rose and cheered in the most terrific way. We could not get on with the play, for the cheering was continuous and drowned every effort which the actors made to speak. We had to let the curtain down at last on Minnie and Gunning still locked in each other's arms.

GROWN FOLK'S WAYS.

GROWN Folks say they ain't scared o' nights.
I guess they needn'ts be,
They has the lamps all lighted up,
An' so, they'se cannot see
The awful things dat hunts around,
Soon as the lights is out,
Right underneath the sheets you hears
Them creepin' all about.

Then your hair it rizes right straight up,
Down your back the cold chills go,
You knows you teeth will soon fall out,
They is a-chatterin' so!
'Sides when the Grown Folks go to bed,
They allus has a light;
An' then (because I sawed it once)
They burns it all the night.

MARGARET ERSKINE

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY L. R. BRIGHTWELL, F.Z.S.

"Fine weather for them as is well wropped up, as the Polar bear said to hisself ven he vos a practising of his skating."

SAM WELLER, *Pickwick Papers.*

FOUR months ago. A feverish zeal inspired the movements of the gatekeeper. The turnstiles twirled like roundabouts. Bath chairs loomed upon the tourist's field of vision no matter where he turned. Camels swayed and lurched beneath a load of effervescing youngsters, the elephant service shuffled all day long upon the broad walk, and even the llama, harnessed to a dog-cart, earned his feed. Waiters, wasps, and visitors surged around the buffets in a thirsty crowd; post cards rattled from the slot machines; seats all crowded, not a vacant chair to be had; whilst from somewhere in the distance came the wheeze and snuffle of a band. Four months ago! And now?—the turnstile all but rusty with disuse; deserted paths and barren flower-beds, shuddering beneath a dough-coloured sky. Frozen ponds, snow-piled roofs and paddocks, burst pipes, smoking chimneys, and a rasping wind. The solitary waiter in the dining-room stands cast away upon a dreary waste of chairs and empty cruets, more desolate far than Robinson Crusoe, who had at least a cat to talk to (the dining-room cat is a misanthrope and doesn't count); the only keeper visible dashes across the intervening space between the cattle sheds and reptile house as though under a heavy fire from some hidden enemy; and the only visitor—apparently I am the only visitor.

As far as I can see, and the driving sleet and snow will not permit of seeing very far, the present weather has divided the inmates of the Zoo into two opposite and sharply defined parties—those that enjoy the cold and those that don't. A profound sympathy with the latter propels me safely up the slippery steps that lead towards the steamy comfort of the reptile house.

Jack Frost has laid determined but unavailing siege to this house for the

"An appeal for outdoor relief."

last three days, and so fast as he dabs his elfin hands upon the glass, making the loveliest patterns with innumerable tracings of his tiny fingers, the guardian steam giant wards him off, and the frost sprite's handiwork pours down the window-pane in rivulets of flabby perspiration. Not to give up without a struggle, however, the frost sprite, together with the east wind, creeps in through the keyhole; but, finding the atmosphere oppressive, they hurry with a moan across the floor, and out again. Even this passing visitation, however, is enough to give the venerable tigrine frog a cough that eventually lands him in the "dead-house," and turns upon their backs some half a dozen cockroaches. The cockroach is an Anglo-Indian, and the east wind invariably proves too much for him. When once he leaves the shelter of the radiator, if only for a moment, he is a lost cockroach, and dies miserably of *cold* in an atmosphere of sixty odd! Most of the reptiles, however, are quite indifferent to the cold, and all else besides. The frogs and lizards stow themselves away beneath the shelter of the rockery; and only a few eccentrics like the tree frog and the gecko sleep in the open on the glass front of their cage, or upside down upon the ceiling. The python and the anaconda sleep the sleep of the grossly over-eaten, immersed in steaming baths, from mid-October till the end of February. Occasionally some one of Tyrell's dainty pets awakes before its time, and then the pretty dear must have its little back patted, its throat massaged, and its more intimate anatomy lulled off to sleep again with potients of the purest oil.

Equally dormant are the inmates of the tortoise house—all save one very old-age pensioner, who is suffering considerable local inconvenience owing to a cockroach having secreted itself beneath his carapace, and being now unable to find the exit. Bang! The door slams behind me, and once more Jack Frost is pulling my ears, tweaking my nose, and treading on my favourite corns. There is very little warmth within the cattle sheds. No need for artificial heating here; everybody is well wrapped up—the deer in short pea jackets, the oxen in trailing ulsters or stormproof reefer coats. The surly yak actually prefers to spend the night in the open, and the bison stand the livelong day stolidly gazing into nowhere and beyond, with half-thawed caps of snow upon their heads, that give them an appearance as of so many bovine flunkeys.

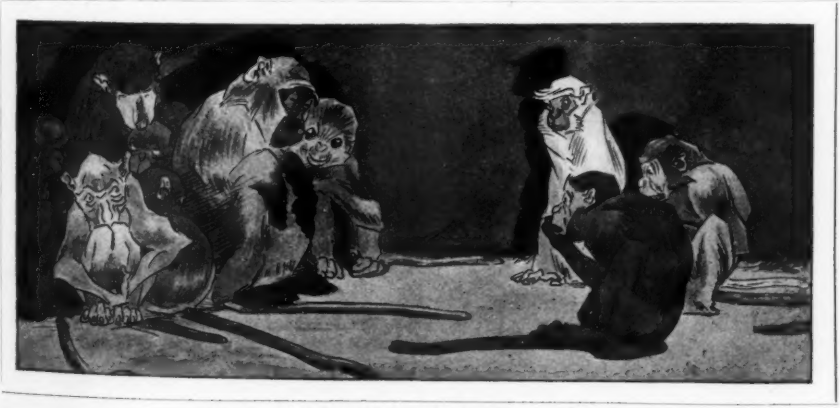
"A Keen Sportsman."
The Arctic Fox dresses to match the landscape.

Overcoats are in force the whole Zoo over; indeed, in the words of the sage—a morsel of whose wisdom stands at the head of this article—it's fine

"Keep the Pot a-Boiling."

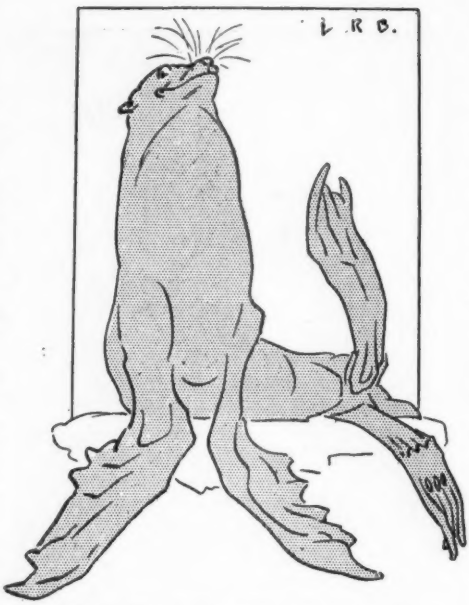
weather for them as is "well wropped up," myself always excepted. Consequently it is not surprising to observe that every animal that revels in the cold is dressed for the part. The beaver, who perseveres in a delusion that he is fighting the cold (whereas the Society is doing all the fighting for him), is cutting logs and eating chunks of firewood with a relish, and is got up, too, as a hardy Arctic explorer should be. Bears, foxes, wild horse, sheep, and rodents all wear something "extra," and some, like the squirrel, show a wealth of finery and ornament entirely lacking in the summer months.

Acting on the principle of those sportsmen who, clad in white nightshirts (in addition, of course, to considerably warmer garments), sally forth at Christmas and shoot the duck upon the frozen marshes, the Arctic fox, the weasel, and the stoat have likewise donned white raiment for the season. The sport is greatly heightened by their mutual quarry, the ptarmigan and mountain hare, who so far enter into the spirit of the thing as to do likewise, and dress to match the altered landscape. The snowy owl is white in summer, so does not need to change; but the Arctic fox, disgusted perhaps



"The end near the stove."

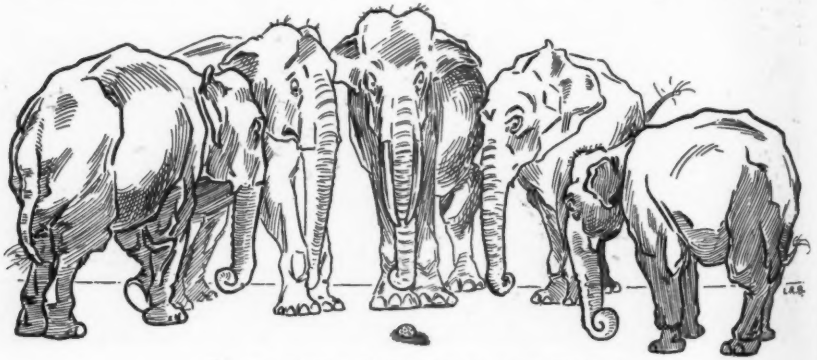
with the shortness of the English summer, takes so long over getting into his summer suit that by the time he has reached a piebald state of half and half it is necessary for him to wear his winter clothes again.



"Cold? Why, it's barely 15° below zero yet!"

Frost and snow are far from everyday occurrences at the Zoo; and such as have a taste for cold and its accompaniments decide to make the most of them. The raven, crafty, buttoned-up old antiquarian that he is, is perfectly enchanted with the broken ice that floats upon his drinking water, and, thinking no doubt that he has found a mine of diamonds of the purest water, is busily engaged in secreting the slippery jewels in divers cracks and crannies. Like many another miser, however, his hoarded wealth brings him but little satisfaction, and it is with great disgust that he presently discovers the decidedly moist, not to say sloppy, condition of his sitting-room, when its warmth has been brought to bear upon the hidden treasure.

Birds of all kinds, in fact, but especially water birds, are keenly interested in the sudden crustiness that has come upon the water everywhere. The gulls seem never tired of dropping scraps of ice upon the stones and listening, head on one side and eye directed skywards, to the chink and tinkle thus produced. Pelicans, cormorants, and other birds with dainty feet, present a curious spectacle in their desperate efforts to preserve a dignified perpendicular. Never for a moment would the coot be tolerated at Prince's. The penguin thumps himself across the chest in true 'bus-driver fashion, but



"There is a species of Bun Famine in the Zoo just now."

at the same time stands, incongruously enough, in a slowly freezing puddle. All the water fowl apparently enjoy these new conditions (the hard frost does not mean starvation to them, as it does to hundreds of their brethren in the world outside the Zoo), and the gambols of many far outshine even the doings of that hardy few who break the ice upon the Serpentine.

In the monkey house it is different. No need to ask at which end of the house the stove is situated. That portion of the big cage presents a wonderful and fearful state of congestion; the more so as the sole ambition of each monkey on the outside of the crowd is to obtain an inside place with as little delay as possible; and this notwithstanding that the house is of a comfortable temperature throughout. Hot meals are the order of the day (and in the case of the "aye-aye," midnight), and a vision of weazen goblin faces hangs above the feeding trough in a manner fearfully suggestive of a Houndsditch coffee stall.

The "outdoor monkey cages" house a hardier race. Herein are some who have faced far harder winters than the present; all the same, there is a general tendency to sit upon the hands—as often doubtless does the reader remember sitting, one of thirty shuddering juveniles, rehearsing to an accompaniment of chattering teeth the splendid truth that t-t-t-t-twice t-two is f-f-f-f-f-f-four. The Japanese ape is apparently on the verge of an explosion. His wife and only son regard him, horrified and amazed, from behind a sheltering sleeping box. Finally, however, he attains a natural attitude, his face assumes its normal dimensions and complexion (a fiery red); and he apparently explains, with watering eyes, "No need for alarm, my dear; merely a piece of ice!"

No, the cold is not for everybody. The ursine tree kangaroos, who charmed innumerable audiences with their acrobatic feats, have now retired to winter quarters in the lemur house. The chimpanzee quartette, that likewise played to overflowing houses in the

At the "Arcadian Arms."

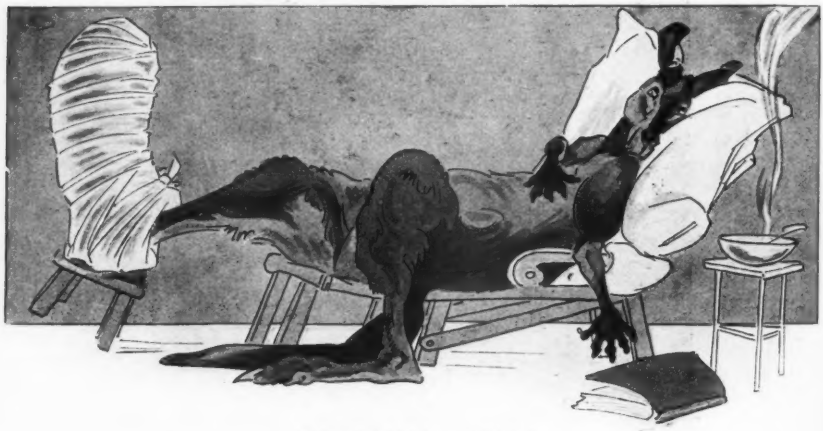
Elderly Dormouse: "Now mind, Boots, don't forget to call me somewhere about the middle of March."

summer months, is left severely to itself; the flamingoes are secluded in the western aviary; and the giraffes have not been out for months. As for the elephants, they rock for ever to and fro, gazing dejectedly down their trunks, and moralise for weeks on end upon the woes of unemployment and the dearth of buns.

There is a species of bun famine in the Zoo just now, and many animals have almost forgotten the taste of those much-varnished delicacies. Only the older and more experienced of the bears still keep a look out for the casual visitor. Hope reigns for ever bright and youthful in the ursine breast; for which reason apparently the Zoo bears have no thoughts of hibernation, lest some confectionery-laden visitor should pass them sleeping at their posts.

The parrots in the outdoor aviary are quite indifferent to the cold; as also are the wild goats and the seals. It is quite impossible, by the way, to have the slightest sympathy or common feeling with the seal. During the heat wave that a few months back was reducing suffering humanity to the level of so many tallow candles, the seal, fresh from his bath, smiled on the gasping crowds with the smug superiority of one who knew that he alone was not in a state of vulgar perspiration; and now, when the very keeper dealing out the daily rations is blue with cold, the seal emerges from a three-hours' nap beneath the ice, and, with the same smug smile, seems to exclaim—"Cold! Cold!! Why, it's barely fifteen below zero yet!!"

The seals and sea-lions are not the only people who are fortified throughout the winter in overcoats of fat. All the northern rodents are thus dressed in Nature's patent frost-proof padding, particularly the dormouse. Think of it, Reader! Chilblains, bronchitis, Christmas bills, all gracefully evaded by just getting into bed and staying there. One can imagine the astonish-



"An ideal foot for a chilblain."

ment of the Boots at some fantastic woodland inn on the dormouse sleepily reminding him, "Now mind, Boots, don't forget to call me somewhere about the middle of March—if the weather's warm, of course." The elderly dormouse is not a graceful sleeper; he is apt to choke at intervals in a very unbecoming manner, and his snore can be heard from a considerable distance.

The kangaroos are under cover; they don't mean to run the risk of chilblains in those monstrous feet of theirs. Neither do the little wallabies; yet one of them catches pneumonia instead, and after a brief retirement in the hospital appears once more before the public on a neatly labelled stand

in the Natural History Museum at South Kensington.

These are hard times with the unofficial and semi-official inmates of the Zoo. Many are the official inhabitants that the winter disappoints—all kinds of tropical birds and beasts that have been waiting anxiously to hear the drumming of the "rains," the "rains" that never come, and many others find the close confinement highly uncongenial; but for those gay free lances, the Alfred Jingles of the animal world, the present weather is a genuine menace. The sparrows that parade the broad walk in crowds of fifty strong, "hunger marchers" with a vengeance, are a sight that makes the wild cat's mouth to water and the kestrel's eyes to shine. Joined by the blackbirds and the thrushes, the sparrows hover on the outskirts of the various aviaries, ready to pick up any crumbs that fall from the rich bird's seed-pan, and invade the houses even with the calm nonchalance of the desperate. The grey squirrels (Canadians all, and well inured to winter) have made countless larders in the grass and trunks of trees, and, as usual, having forgotten the sites of two-thirds of these impromptu granaries, are loafing in the vicinity of a grocer's cart that stands outside the dining-rooms, and threaten to develop very loose notions respecting the laws of property.

"Who Cares?"

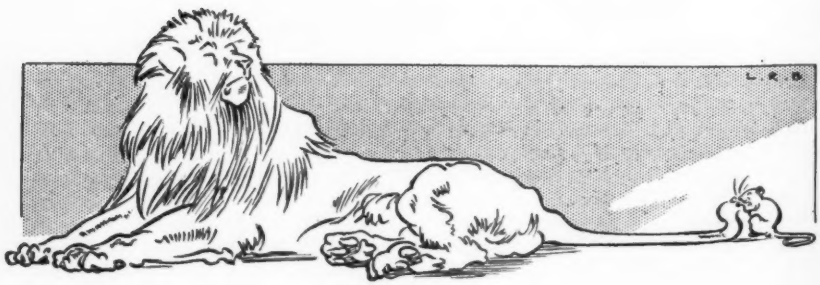
It is standing room only on the beams and rafters of the antelope house. Warmth, good food, water that never turns to ice—what more could a sparrow want? Nothing, surely, and in consequence he is here in force, as also are the mice. The meat-fed mice

that live in the lion house are more in evidence than ever this dull weather, as also are the rats upon the other side of the gardens, and only last night the hippopotamus sat down upon one, but slept very little the worse in consequence.

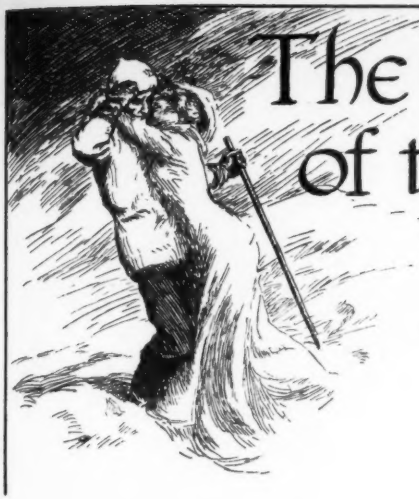
Vagrant long-shore gulls now make their appearance in the vicinity of the sea-lion's pool, watching their opportunity to snatch the fish from beneath the very nose of the lawful recipient. The penguin would like to do the same, but is too short in the legs and wind, so he merely wipes his beak upon his wing and chuckles admiration.

The prairie marmots have a poor opinion of the English winter, compared with the winter of their native land; it must seem tame, indeed, but the last few days have persuaded them to seek retirement in their burrows.

Whew! The wind apparently intends to make a night of it; the sun, which, like the mercury in the thermometer, has been steadily going down hill for the last few hours, finally disappears, and, with the first notes of the "all-out" bell—a purely formal proceeding surely under the present circumstances—the snow begins to fall in whirling clouds of feathery confusion. There is just time to pay a flying visit to Sam and Barbara, and we find that loving couple in tremendous spirits. They have only one fault to find with the present weather; they would like to see the ice a little thicker, and a little more of it. The ice having come off rather the worse in a little argument with a sledge hammer, supported by the keeper, it certainly does present a somewhat unstable appearance. Anywhere outside the Zoo it would certainly be labelled "Dangerous." But who cares! Certainly not Sam and Barbara. Even the Del Monte troupe of polar bears, when paying one of their fleeting visits to the Zoo, could scarcely present a more delightful spectacle. Crash! and Sam and his spouse appear suddenly through the ice, like two goblins in a pantomime; the lady in particular so bejewelled with festoons of tinkling icicles that she may be reasonably expected even to outshine the musical *equestrienne* of Banbury Cross fame. For a moment they gaze at me in mild astonishment to see any creature fail so signally to appreciate the biting cold; then, with a snort of impatience, they wheel about and shuffle off to supper and to bed—and I to thaw within the oily comfort of a motor-'bus.



Presumption.



The Glamour of the Snow

BY ALGERNON BLACKWOOD.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRED PEGRAM.

I.

HIBBERT, always conscious of two worlds, was in this mountain village conscious of three. It lay on the Italian side of the Alps, and he had taken a room in the little post office, where he could be at peace to write his book, yet at the same time enjoy the winter sports and find companionship in the hotels when he wanted it.

The three worlds that met and mingled here seemed to his imaginative temperament very obvious, though it is doubtful if another mind less intuitively equipped would have seen them so well-defined. There was the world of tourist English, civilised, quasi-educated, to which he belonged by birth, at any rate; there was the world of peasants to which he felt himself drawn by sympathy—for he loved and admired their toiling, simple life; and there was this other—which he could only call the world of Nature. To this last, however, in virtue of a vehement poetic imagination, and a tumultuous pagan instinct fed by his very blood, he felt that most of him belonged. The others borrowed from it, as it were, for visits. Here, with the soul of Nature, hid his central life.

Between all three was conflict—potential conflict. On the skating-rink each Sunday the tourists regarded the natives as intruders; in the church the peasants plainly questioned: "Why do you come? We are here to worship; you to stare and whisper!" For neither of these two worlds accepted the other. And neither did Nature accept the tourists, for it took advantage of their least mistakes, and indeed, even of the peasant-world "accepted" only those who were strong and bold enough to invade her savage domain with sufficient skill to protect themselves from several forms of—death.

Now Hibbert was keenly aware of this potential conflict and want of harmony; he felt outside, yet caught by it—torn in the three directions because he was partly of each world, but wholly in only one. There grew in him a constant, subtle effort—or, at least, desire—to unify them and decide positively to which he should belong and live in. The attempt, of course, was largely subconscious. It was the natural instinct of a richly imaginative nature seeking the point of equilibrium, so that the mind could feel at peace and his brain be free to do good work.

Among the guests no one especially claimed his interest. The men were nice but undistinguished—athletic schoolmasters, doctors snatching a holiday, good fellows all; the women, equally various and, for the most part slightly underbred—the clever, the

would-be-fast, the dare-to-be-dull, the women "who understood," and the usual pack of jolly dancing girls and "flappers." And Hibbert, with his forty odd years of thick experience behind him, got on well with the lot; he understood them all; they belonged to definite, predigested types that are the same all the world over, and that he had met all the world over long ago.

But to none of them did he belong. His nature was too "multiple" to subscribe to the set of shibboleths of any one class. And, since all liked him, and felt that somehow he seemed outside of them—spectator, looker-on—all sought to claim him.

In a sense, therefore, the three worlds fought for him: natives, tourists, Nature. . . .

It was thus began the singular conflict for the soul of Hibbert. *In* his own soul, however, it took place. Neither the peasants nor the tourists were conscious that they fought for anything. And Nature, they say, is merely blind and automatic.

The assault upon him of the peasants may be left out of account, for it is obvious that they stood no chance of success. The tourist world, however, made a gallant effort to subdue him to themselves. But the evenings in the hotel, when dancing was not in order, were—English. The provincial imagination was set upon a throne and worshipped heavily through incense of the stupidest conventions possible. Hibbert used to go back early to his room in the post office to work.

"It is a mistake on my part to have *realised* that there is any conflict at all," he thought, as he crunched home over the snow at midnight after one of the dances. "It would have been better to have kept outside it all and done my work. Better," he added, looking back down the silent village street to the church tower, "and—*safer*."

The adjective had slipped from his mind before he was aware of it. He turned with an involuntary start and looked about him. He knew perfectly well what it meant—this thought that had poked its head up from the subconscious self. He understood, without being able to express it fully, the meaning that betrayed itself in the choice of the adjective. For if he had ignored the existence of this conflict he would at the same time have remained outside the arena. Whereas now he had entered the lists. Now this battle for his soul must have issue. And he knew that the spell of Nature was greater for him than all other spells in the world combined—greater than love, revelry, pleasure, greater even than study. He had always been afraid to let himself go. His pagan soul dreaded her terrific powers of witchery even while he worshipped.

The little village already slept. The world lay smothered in snow. The chalet roofs shone white beneath the moon, and pitch-black shadows gathered by the walls of the church. His eye rested a moment on the square stone tower with its frosted cross that pointed to the sky: then travelled with a leap of many thousand feet to the enormous mountains that brushed the brilliant stars. Gaunt and terrible rose the huge peaks above the slumbering village, measuring the night and heavens. They beckoned him. And something borne of the snowy desolation, borne of the midnight and the silent grandeur, borne of the great listening hollows of the night, something that lay 'twixt terror and wonder, dropped from the vast wintry spaces down into his heart—and called him. Very softly, unrecorded in any word or thought his brain could compass, it laid its spell upon him. Fingers as of snow brushed the surface of his heart. The power and quiet majesty of the winter's night appalled him. . . .

Fumbling a moment with the big unwieldy key, he let himself in and went upstairs to bed. Two thoughts went with him—apparently very ordinary and sensible ones:

"What fools these peasants are to sleep through such a night!" And the other:

"Those dances tire me. I'll never go again. My work only suffers in the morning." The claims of peasants and tourists upon him seemed thus in a single instant weakened.

The clash of battle troubled half his dreams. Nature had sent her Beauty of the Night and won the first assault. The others, routed and dismayed, fled far away.

II.

"Don't go back to your dreary old post office. We're going to have supper in my room—something hot. Come and join us. Hurry up!"

There had been an ice carnival, and the last party, tailing up the snow-slope to the hotel, had called him. The Chinese lanterns smoked and sputtered on the wires; the band had long since gone. The cold was bitter and the moon came only momentarily between high, driving clouds. From the shed where the people changed from skates to snow-boots he shouted something to the effect that he was "following"; but no answer came; the moving shadows of those who had called were already merged high up against the village darkness. The voices died away. Doors slammed. Hibbert found himself alone on the deserted rink.

And it was then, quite suddenly, the impulse came to—stay and skate alone. The thought of the stuffy hotel room, and of those noisy people with their obvious jokes and laughter, oppressed him. He felt a longing to be alone with the night, to taste her wonder all by himself there beneath the stars, gliding over the ice. It was not yet midnight, and he could skate for half an hour. That supper party would merely think he had changed his mind and gone to bed, if they noticed his absence at all.

It was an impulse, yes, and not an unnatural one; yet even at the time it struck him that something more than impulse lay concealed behind it. More than invitation, yet certainly less than command, there was a vague queer feeling that he stayed because he had to, almost as though there was something he had forgotten, overlooked, left undone. Imaginative temperaments are often thus; and impulse is ever weakness. For with such ill-considered opening of the doors to hasty action may come an invasion of other forces at the same time—forces merely waiting their opportunity!

He caught the fugitive warning even while he dismissed it as absurd, and the next minute he was whirling over the smooth ice in delightful curves and loops beneath the moon. There was no fear of collision. He could take his own speed and space as he willed. The shadows of the towering mountains fell across the rink, and a wind of ice came from the forests, where the snow lay ten feet deep. The hotel lights winked and went out. The village slept. The high wire netting could not keep out the wonder of the winter night that grew about him like a presence. He skated on and on, keen exhilarating pleasure in his tingling blood, and weariness all forgotten.

And then, midway in the delight of rushing movement, he saw a figure moving behind the wire netting, watching him. With a start that almost made him lose his balance—for the abruptness of the new arrival was so unlooked for—he paused and stared. Although the light was dim he made out that it was the figure of a woman and that she was feeling her way along the netting, trying to get in. Against the white background of the snow-field he watched her rather stealthy efforts as she passed with a gliding step over the banked-up snow. She was tall and slim and graceful; he could see that even in the dark. And then, of course, he understood. It was another adventurous skater like himself, stolen down unawares from hotel or chalet, and searching for the opening. At once, making a sign and pointing with one hand, he turned swiftly and skated over to the little entrance on the other side.

But, even before he got there, a sound came on the ice behind him and, with an exclamation of amazement he could not suppress, he turned to see her swerving up to his side across the width of the rink. She had somehow found another way in.

Hibbert, as a rule, was punctilious, and in these free-and-easy places, perhaps, especially so. If only for his own protection he did not seek to make

advances unless some kind of introduction paved the way. But for these two to skate together in the semi-darkness without speech, often of necessity brushing shoulders almost, was too absurd to think of. Accordingly he raised his cap and spoke. His actual words he seems unable to recall, nor what the girl said in reply, except that she answered him in accented English with some commonplace about doing figures at midnight on an empty rink. Quite natural it was, and right. She wore grey clothes of some kind, though not the customary long gloves or sweater, for indeed her hands were bare, and presently when he skated with her, he wondered with something like astonishment at their dry and icy coldness.

And she was delicious to skate with —supple, sure and light, fast as a man yet with the freedom of a child, sinuous and steady at the same time. Her flexibility made him wonder, and when he asked where she learned she murmured—he caught the breath against his ear and recalled later that it was singularly cold—that she could hardly tell, for she had been accustomed to the ice ever since she could remember.

But her face he never properly saw. A muffler of white fur buried her neck to the ears and her cap came over the eyes. He only saw that she was young. Nor could he gather her hotel or chalet, for she pointed vaguely, when he asked her, up the slopes. "Just over there——" she said, quickly taking his hand again. He did not press her; no doubt she wished to hide her escapade And the touch of her hand thrilled him more than anything he could remember; even through his thick glove he felt the softness of that cold and delicate touch.

The clouds thickened over the mountains. It grew darker. They talked very little, and did not always skate together. Often they separated, curving about in corners by themselves, but always coming together again in the centre of the rink; and when she left him thus Hibbert was conscious of --yes, of missing her He found a peculiar satisfaction, almost a fascination, in skating by her side. It was quite an adventure—these two strangers with the ice and snow and night!

Midnight had long since sounded from the old church tower before they parted. She gave the sign, and he skated quickly to the shed, meaning to find a seat and help her take her skates off. Yet when he turned—she had already gone. He saw her slim figure gliding away across the snow . . . and hurrying for the last time round the rink alone he searched in vain for the opening she had twice used in this curious way.

"How very queer!" he thought, referring to the wire netting. "She must have lifted it and wriggled under. . . .!"

Wondering how in the world she managed it, what in the world had possessed him to be so free with her, and who in the world she was, he went up the steep slope to the post office and so to bed, her promise to come again another night still ringing delightfully in his ears. And curious were the thoughts and sensations that accompanied him. Most of all, perhaps, was the half suggestion of some dim memory that he had known this girl before, had met her somewhere, more—that she knew him. For in her voice—a low, soft, windy little voice it was, tender and soothing for all its quiet coldness—there lay some faint reminder of two others he had known, both long since gone: the voice of the woman he had loved, and—the voice of his mother.

But this time through his dreams there ran no clash of battle. He was conscious, rather, of something cold and clinging that made him think of sifting snowflakes climbing slowly with entangling touch and thickness round his feet. The snow, coming without noise, each flake so light and tiny none can mark the spot whereon it settles, yet the mass of it able to smother whole villages, wove through the very texture of his mind—cold, bewildering, deadening effort with its clinging network of ten million feathery touches.

III.

In the morning Hibbert realised he had done a foolish thing. The brilliant sunshine that drenched the valley made him see this, and the sight of his work-table with its typewriter, books, papers and the rest, brought additional conviction. To have skated with a girl alone at midnight, no matter how innocently the thing had come about, was unwise—unfair, especially to her. Gossip in these little winter resorts was worse than in a provincial town. He hoped no one had seen them. Luckily the night had been dark. Most likely none had heard the ring of skates.

Deciding that in future he would be more careful, he plunged into work, and sought to dismiss the matter from his mind.

But in his times of leisure the memory returned persistently to haunt him. When he "ski-d," "luged," or danced in the evenings, and especially when he skated on the little rink, he was aware that the eyes of his mind forever sought this strange companion of the night. A hundred times he fancied that he saw her, but always sight deceived him. Her face he might not know, but he could hardly fail to recognise her figure. Yet nowhere among them did he catch a glimpse of that slim young creature he had skated with alone beneath the clouded stars. He searched in vain. Even his inquiries as to the occupants of the private chalets brought no results. He had lost her. But the queer thing was that he felt as though she were somewhere close; he *knew* she had not really gone. While people came and left with every day, it never once occurred to him that she had left. On the contrary, he felt assured that they would meet again

This thought he never quite acknowledged. Perhaps it was the wish that fathered it only. And, even when he did meet her, it was a question how he would speak and claim acquaintance, or whether *she* would recognise himself. It might be awkward. He almost came to dread a meeting, though "dread," of course, is far too strong a word to describe an emotion that was half delight, half wondering anticipation.

Meanwhile the season was in full swing. Hibbert felt in perfect health, worked hard, ski-d, skated, luged, and at night danced fairly often—in spite of his decision. This dancing was, however, an act of subconscious surrender; it really meant he hoped to find her among the whirling couples. He was searching for her without quite acknowledging it to himself; and the hotel-world, meanwhile, thinking it had won him over, teased and chaffed him. He made excuses in a similar vein; but all the time he watched and searched and—waited.

For several days the sky held clear and bright and frosty, bitterly cold, everything crisp and sparkling in the sun; but there was no sign of fresh snow, and the ski-ers began to grumble. On the mountains was an icy crust that made "running" dangerous; they wanted the frozen, dry, and powdery snow that makes for speed, with steering easier and falling less severe. But the keen east wind showed no signs of changing for a whole ten days. Then, suddenly, there came a touch of softer air and the weather-wise began to prophesy.

Hibbert, who was delicately sensitive to the least change in earth or sky, was perhaps the first to feel it. Only he did not prophesy. He knew through every nerve in his body that moisture had crept into the air, was accumulating, and that presently a fall would come. For he responded to the moods of Nature like a fine barometer.

And the knowledge, this time, brought into his heart a strange little wayward emotion that was hard to account for—a feeling of unexplained uneasiness and disquieting joy. For behind it, woven through it rather, ran a faint exhilaration that connected remotely somewhere with that touch of delicious alarm, that tiny anticipating "dread," that so puzzled him when he thought of his next meeting with his skating companion of the night. It lay beyond all words, all telling, this queer relationship between the two; but somehow the girl and snow ran in a pair across his mind.

Perhaps for imaginative writing-men,

more than for other workers, the smallest change of mood betrays itself at once. His work at any rate revealed this slight shifting of emotional values in his soul. Not that his writing suffered, but that it altered, subtly as those changes of sky or sea or landscape that come with the passing of afternoon into evening—imperceptibly. A subconscious excitement sought to push outwards and express itself . . . and, knowing the uneven effect such moods produced in his work, he laid his pen aside and took instead to reading that he had to do.

Meanwhile the brilliance passed from the sunshine, the sky grew slowly overcast ; by dusk the mountain tops came singularly close and sharp ; the distant valley rose into absurdly near perspective. The moisture increased, rapidly approaching saturation point, when it must fall in snow. And Hibbert watched and waited.

And in the morning the world lay smothered beneath its fresh white carpet. It snowed heavily till noon, thickly, incessantly, chokingly, a foot or more ; then the sky cleared, the sun came out in splendour, the wind shifted back to the east, and frost came down upon the mountains with its keenest and most biting tooth. The drop in the temperature was tremendous, but the ski-ers were jubilant. Next day the " running " would be fast and perfect. Already the mass was settling, and the surface freezing into those mosslike, powdery crystals that make the ski run almost of their own accord with the faint " sishing " as of a bird's wings through the air.

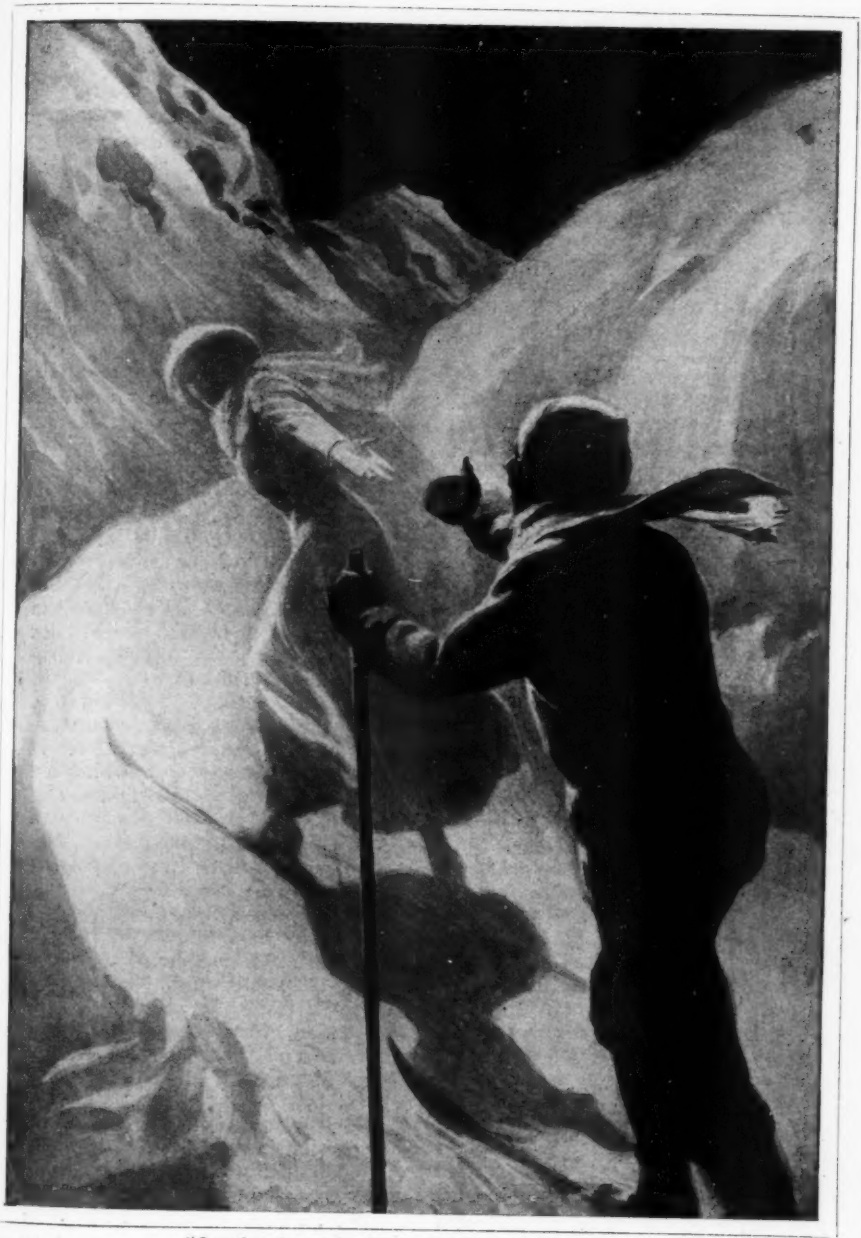
IV.

That night there was excitement in the little hotel-world, first because there was a *bal costumé*, but chiefly because the new snow had come. And Hibbert went—felt drawn to go ; he did not go in costume, but he wanted to talk about the slopes and ski-ing with the other men, and at the same time. . .

Ah, there was the truth, the deeper necessity that called. For the singular connection between the stranger and the snow again betrayed itself, utterly beyond explanation as before, but vital and insistent. Some hidden instinct in his pagan soul—heaven knows how he phrased it even to himself, if he phrased it at all !—whispered that with the snow the girl would be somewhere about, would emerge from her hiding place, would even *look for him*.

Absolutely unwarranted it was. He laughed while he stood before the little glass and trimmed his moustache, tried to make his black tie sit straight and shook down his dinner jacket so that it should lie upon the shoulders without a crease. His brown eyes were very bright. " I look younger than I usually do," he thought. It was unsuual, even significant, in a man who had no vanity about his appearance and certainly never questioned his age or tried to look younger than he was. Affairs of the heart, with one tumultuous exception that left no fuel for lesser subsequent fires, had never troubled him. The forces of his soul and mind not called upon for " work " and obvious duties, all went to Nature. The desolate, wild places of the earth were what he loved, night, and the beauty of the stars and snow. And this evening he felt their claims upon him mightily stirring. A rising wildness caught his blood, quickened his pulse, woke longing and passion too. But chiefly snow. The snow whirred softly through his thoughts like white, seductive dreams. . . . For the snow had come now ; and She, it seemed, had somehow come with it—into his mind.

And yet he stood before that twisted mirror and pulled his tie and coat askew a dozen times, as though it mattered. " What in the world is up with me ? " he thought. Then, laughing a little, he turned before leaving the room to put his private papers in order. The green morocco desk that held them he took down from the shelf and laid upon the table. Tied to the lid was the visiting card with his brother's London address " in case of accident." On the way down to the hotel he wondered why he had done this, for though imaginative, he was not the kind of man who dealt in



"Sometimes he saw her hand stretched out to find his own."

presentiments. Moods with him were strong, but ever held in leash.

"It's almost like a warning," he thought, smiling. He drew his thick coat tightly round the throat as the freezing air bit at him. "Those warnings one reads of in stories sometimes . . . !"

A delicious happiness was in his blood. Over the edge of the hills across the valley rose the moon. He saw her silver sheet the world of snow. Snow covered all. It smothered sound and distance It smothered houses, streets and human beings. It smothered—life.

V.

In the hall there was light and bustle; people were already arriving from the other hotels and chalets, their costumes hidden beneath many wraps. Groups of men in evening dress stood about smoking, talking "snow" and "ski-ing." The band was tuning up. The claims of the hotel-world clashed about him faintly as of old. At the big glass windows of the verandah peasants stopped a moment on their way home from the café to peer. Hibbert thought laughingly of that conflict he used to imagine. He laughed because it suddenly seemed all unreal. He belonged so utterly to Nature and the mountains, and especially to those desolate slopes where now the snow lay thick and fresh and sweet, that there was no question of a conflict at all. The power of the newly-fallen snow had caught him, proving it without effort. Out there, up in those lonely reaches of the moonlit ridges, the snow was ready—masses and masses of it—cool, soft, inviting. He longed for it. It awaited him. He thought of the intoxicating delight of ski-ing in the moonlight. . . .

Thus, somehow, in vivid flashing vision, he thought of it while he stood there smoking with the other men and talking all the "shop" of ski-ing.

And, ever mysteriously blended with this power of the snow, poured also through his inner being the power of the girl. He could not disabuse his mind of the insinuating presence of the two together. He remembered that queer skating-impulse of ten days ago, the impulse that had let her in. That any mind, even an imaginative one, could pass beneath the sway of such a fancy was strange enough; and Hibbert, while fully aware of the disorder, yet found a curious joy in yielding to it. This insubordinate centre that drew him towards old pagan beliefs had assumed command. With a kind of sensuous pleasure he let himself be conquered.

And snow that night seemed in everybody's thoughts. The dancing couples talked of it; the hotel proprietors congratulated one another; it meant good sport and satisfied their guests; everyone was planning trips and expeditions, talking of slopes and telemarks, of flying speed and distance, of drifts and crust and frost. Vitality and enthusiasm pulsed in the very air; all were alert and active, positive, radiating currents of creative life even into the stuffy atmosphere of that crowded ball-room. And the snow had caused it, the snow had brought it; all this discharge of eager sparkling energy was due primarily to the—Snow.

But in the mind of Hibbert, by some swift alchemy of his pagan yearnings, this energy became transmuted. It rarified itself, gleaming in white and crystal currents of passionate anticipation, which he transferred, as by a species of electrical imagination, into the personality of the girl—the Girl of the Snow. She somewhere was waiting for him, expecting him, calling to him softly from those leagues of moonlit mountain. He remembered the touch of that cool, dry hand; the soft and icy breath against his cheek; the hush and softness of her presence in the way she came and the way she had gone again—like a flurry of snow the wind sent gliding up the slopes. She, like himself, belonged out there. He fancied that he heard her little windy voice come sifting to him through the snowy branches of the trees, calling his name . . . that haunting little voice that dived straight to the centre of his life as once, long years ago, two other voices used to do. . . .

But nowhere among the costumed dancers did he see her slender figure. He danced with one and all, distrait and absent, a stupid partner as each girl discovered, his eyes ever turning towards the door and windows, hoping to catch the luring face, the vision that did not come . . . and at length, hoping even against hope. For the ball-room thinned ; groups left one by one, going home to their hotels and chalets ; the band tired obviously ; people sat drinking lemon-squashes at the little tables, the men mopping their foreheads, everybody ready for bed.

It was close on midnight. As Hibbert passed through the hall to get his overcoat and snow-boots, he saw men in the passage by the " sport-room," greasing their ski against an early start. Knapsack luncheons were being ordered by the kitchen swing doors. He sighed. Lighting a cigarette a friend offered him, he returned a confused reply to some question as to whether he could join their party in the morning. It seemed he did not hear it. He passed through the outer vestibule between the double-glass doors, and went into the night.

The man who asked the question watched him go, an expression of anxiety momentarily in his eyes.

" Don't think he heard you," said another, laughing. " You've got to shout to Hibbert, his mind's so full of his work."

" He works too hard," suggested the first, " full of queer ideas and dreams."

But Hibbert's silence was not rudeness. He had not caught the invitation, that was all. The call of the hotel world had faded. He no longer heard it. Another wilder call was sounding in his ears.

For up the street he had seen a little figure moving. Close against the shadows of the baker's shop it glided —white, slim, enticing.

VI.

And at once into his mind passed the hush and softness of the snow—yet with it a searching, crying wildness for the heights. He knew by some incalculable, swift instinct she would not meet him in the village street. It was not there, amid crowding houses, she would speak to him. Indeed, already she had disappeared, melted from view up the white vista of the moonlit road. Yonder, he divined, she waited where the highway narrowed abruptly into the mountain path beyond the chalets.

It did not even occur to him to hesitate ; mad though it seemed, and was—this sudden craving for the heights *with her*, at least for open spaces where the snow lay thick and fresh—it was too imperious to be denied. He does not remember going up to his room, putting the sweater over his evening clothes, and getting into the fur gauntlet gloves and the helmet cap of wool. Most certainly he has no recollection of fastening on his ski ; he must have done it automatically. Some faculty of normal observation was in abeyance, as it were. His mind was out beyond the village—out with the snowy mountains and the moon.

Henri Défago, putting up the shutters over his *café* windows, saw him pass, and wondered mildly : " Un monsieur qui fait du ski à cette heure ! Il est Anglais, donc . . . ! " He shrugged his shoulders, as though a man had the right to choose his own way of death ; and Marthe Perotti, the hunchback wife of the shoemaker, looking by chance from her window, caught his figure moving swiftly up the road. She had other thoughts, for she knew and believed the old traditions of the witches and snow-beings that steal the souls of men. She had even heard, 'twas said, the dreaded " synagogue " pass roaring down the street at night, and now, as then, she hid her eyes. " They've called to him . . . and he must go," she murmured, making the sign of the cross.

But no one sought to stop him. Hibbert recalls only a single incident until he found himself beyond the houses, searching for her along the fringe of forest where the moonlight met the snow in a bewildering frieze of fantastic shadows. And

the incident was simply this—that he remembered passing the church. Catching the outline of its tower against the stars, he was aware of a faint sense of hesitation that was almost *malaise*. A vague uneasiness came and went—jarred unpleasantly across the flow of his excited feelings, chilling exhilaration. He caught the instant's discord, dismissed it, and—passed on. The seduction of the snow smothered the hint before he realised that it had touched the edge of warning.

And then he saw her. She stood there waiting in a little clear space of shining snow, dressed all in white, part of the moonlight and the glistening background, her slender figure just discernible.

"I waited, for I knew you would come," the silvery little voice of windy beauty floated down to him. "You *had* to come."

"I'm ready," he answered, "for I knew it too."

The world of Nature caught him to its heart in those few words—the wonder and the glory of the night and snow. Life leaped within him. The passion of his pagan soul exulted, rose in joy, flowed out to her. He neither reflected nor considered, but let himself go like the veriest schoolboy in the wildness of first love.

"Give me your hand," he cried, "I'm coming. . . . !"

"A little further on, a little higher," came her delicious answer. "Here it is too near the village—and the church."

And the words seemed wholly right and natural; he did not dream of questioning them; he understood that with even this little touch of civilisation in sight the familiarity he suggested was impossible. Once out upon the open mountains, 'mid the freedom of huge slopes and towering peaks, the stars and moon to witness and the wilderness of snow to watch, they could taste an innocence of happy intercourse without the dead conventions that imprison literal minds.

He urged his pace, yet did not quite overtake her. The girl kept always just a little bit ahead of his best efforts. . . . And soon they left the trees behind and passed upon the fringe of the enormous slopes of the sea of snow that rolled in mountainous terror and beauty to the very stars. The wonder of the white world caught him away. Under the steady moonlight it was more than haunting. It was a living, white, bewildering power that deliciously confused the senses and laid a spell of deep and wild perplexity upon the heart. It was a personality that cloaked, and yet revealed itself through all this sheeted whiteness of the snow. It rose, went with him, fled before and followed after. Slowly it dropped lithe, gleaming arms about his neck, gathering him in. . . .

Certainly some soft persuasion coaxed his very soul, urging him ever forwards, upwards, on towards the higher icy slopes. Judgment and reason left their throne, it seemed, completely, as in the madness of some sweet intoxication. The girl, slim and seductive, kept always just ahead, so that he never quite came up with her. He saw the white enchantment of her face and figure, something that streamed about her neck flying like a wreath of snow in the wind, and heard the alluring accents of her whispering voice that called from time to time: "A little further on, a little higher. . . . Then we'll run home together!"

Sometimes he saw her hand stretched out to find his own, but each time, just as he came up with her, he saw her still in front, the hand and arm withdrawn. They took a gentle angle of ascent. The toil seemed nothing. For in this crystal, wine-like air fatigue existed not. The sishing of the ski through the powdery surface of the snow was the only sound that broke the stillness; this, with his breathing and the rustle of her skirts, was all he heard. Cold moonshine, snow and silence held the world. The sky was black, and the peaks beyond cut into it like frosted wedges of iron and steel. Far below the valley slept, the village long since hidden out of sight. He felt that he could never tire. The sound of the church clock rose from

time to time faintly through the air—more and more distant.

"Give me your hand. It's time now to turn back."

"Just one more slope," she laughed. "That ridge above us. Then we'll make for home." And her low voice mingled pleasantly with the purring of their ski. His own seemed harsh and ugly by comparison.

"But I have never come so high before. It's glorious! This world of silent snow and moonlight—and *you*. You're a child of the snow, I swear. Let me come up—closer—to see your face—and touch your little hand."

Her laughter answered him.

"Come on! A little higher. Here we're quite alone together."

"It's magnificent," he cried. "But why did you hide away so long? I've looked and searched for you in vain ever since we skated"—he was going to say "ten days ago," but the accurate memory of time had gone from him; he was not sure whether it was days or years or minutes. His thoughts of earth were scattered and confused.

"You looked for me in the wrong places," he heard her murmur just above him. "You looked in places where I never go. Hotels and houses kill me. I avoid them." She laughed—a fine, shrill, windly little laugh.

"I loathe them, too——"

He stopped. The girl had suddenly come quite close. A breath of ice passed through his very soul. She had touched him.

"But this awful cold!" he cried out, sharply, "this freezing cold that takes me. The wind is rising; it's a wind of ice. Come, let us turn . . .!"

But when he plunged forward to hold her, or at least to look, the girl was gone again. And something in the way she stood there a few feet beyond, and stared down into his eyes so steadfastly in silence, made him shiver. The moonlight was behind her, but in some odd way he could not focus sight upon her face, although so close. The gleam of eyes he caught, but all the rest seemed white and snowy as though he looked beyond her to the slopes—out into space.

The sound of the church bell came up faintly from the valley far below, and he counted the strokes—five. A sudden, curious weakness seized him as he listened. Deep within it was, deadly yet somehow sweet, and hard to resist. He felt like sinking down upon the snow and lying there. . . . They had been climbing for five hours. . . . It was, of course, the warning of complete exhaustion.

With a great effort he fought and overcame it. It passed away as suddenly as it came.

"We'll turn," he said with a decision he hardly felt. "It will be dawn before we reach the village again. Come at once. It's time for home."

The sense of exhilaration had utterly left him. An emotion that was akin to fear swept coldly through him. But her whispering answer turned it instantly to terror—a terror that gripped him horribly and turned him weak and unresisting.

"Our home is—*here!*" A burst of wildish laughter, loud and shrill, accompanied the words. It was like a whistling wind. The wind *had* risen, and clouds obscured the moon. "A little higher—where we cannot hear the wicked bells," she cried, and for the first time seized him deliberately by the hand.

And Hibbert tried to turn away in escape, and so trying, found for the first time that the power of the snow—that other power which does not exhilarate but deadens effort—was upon him. The suffocating weakness that it brings to exhausted men, luring them to the sleep of death in her clinging soft embrace, lulling the will and conquering all desire for life—this was awfully upon him. His feet were heavy and entangled. He could not turn, or move.

The girl was close beside him; he felt her chilly breath upon his cheeks; her hair passed blindingly across his eyes; and that icy wind came with her. He saw her whiteness close; again, it seemed, his sight passed through her into space as though she had no face.

Her arms were round his neck. She drew him softly downwards to his knees. He sank; he yielded utterly; he obeyed. Her weight was upon him, smothering, delicious. The snow was to his waist. . . . She kissed him softly on the lips, the eyes, all over his face. And then she spoke his name in that voice of love and wonder, the voice that held the accent of two others—both taken over long ago by Death—the voice of his mother, and of the woman he had loved.

He made one more feeble effort to resist. Then, realising even while he struggled that this soft weight about his heart was sweeter than anything life could ever bring, he let his muscles relax, and sank back into the soft oblivion of the covering snow. Her kisses bore him into sleep.

VII.

They say that men who know the sleep of exhaustion in the snow find no awakening on the hither side of death. . . . . The hours passed and the moon sank down below the white world's rim. Then, suddenly, there came a little crash upon his breast and neck, and Hibbert—woke.

He slowly turned bewildered, heavy eyes upon the desolate mountains, stared dizzily about him, tried to rise. At first his muscles would not act; a numbing, aching pain possessed him. He uttered a long, thin cry for help, and heard its faintness swallowed by the wind. And then he understood vaguely why he was only warm—not dead. For this very wind that took his cry had built up a sheltering mound of snow against his body while he slept. Like a curving wave it ran beside him. It was the breaking of its over-toppling edge that caused the crash, and the coldness of the mass against his neck that woke him.

Dawn kissed the eastern sky; pale gleams of gold shot every peak with splendour; but ice was in the air, and the dry and frozen snow blew with the wind like powder from the surface of the slopes. He saw the points of his ski projecting just below him. Then he—remembered. It seems he had just strength enough to realise that, could he but rise and stand, he might fly with terrific impetus towards the woods and village far beneath. The ski would carry him. But if he failed and fell . . . !

How he contrived it Hibbert never knew; this fear of death somehow called out his whole available reserve force. He rose slowly, balanced a moment, then, taking the angle of an immense zigzag, started down the awful slopes like an arrow from a bow. And automatically the splendid muscles of the practised ski-er and athlete saved and guided him, for he was hardly conscious of controlling either speed or direction. The snow stung face and eyes like fine steel shot; ridge after ridge flew past; the summits raced across the sky; the valley leaped up as with mighty bounds to meet him. He scarcely felt the ground beneath his feet as the huge slopes and distance melted before the lightning speed of that descent from death to life.

He took it in four mile-long zigzags, and it was the turning at each corner that nearly finished him, for then the strain of balancing taxed to the verge of collapse the remnants of his strength.

Slopes that have taken hours to climb can be descended in a short half-hour on ski, but Hibbert had lost all count of time. Quite other thoughts and feelings mastered him in that wild, swift dropping through the air that was like the flight of a bird. For ever close upon his heels came following forms and voices with the whirling snow-dust. He heard that little silvery voice of death and laughter at his back. Shrill and wild, with the whistling of the wind past his ears, he caught its pursuing tones; but in anger now, no longer soft and coaxing. And it was accompanied; she did not follow alone. It seemed a host of these flying figures of the snow chased madly just behind him. He felt them smite his neck and cheeks, snatch at his hands and try to entangle his feet and ski in drifts. His eyes they blinded, and they caught his breath away. .

The terror of the heights and snow and winter desolation urged him forward in the maddest race with death a human being ever knew; and so terrific was the speed that before the gold and crimson had left the summits to touch the ice-lips of the lower glaciers, he saw the friendly forest far beneath swing up and welcome him.

And it was then there came the strangest thing of all. For moving slowly along the edge of the woods he saw a light. A man was carrying it. A procession of human figures was passing in a dark line laboriously through the snow. And—he heard the sound of chanting.

Instinctively, without a second's hesitation, he changed his course. No longer flying at an angle as before, he pointed his ski straight down the mountain side. The dreadful steepness did not frighten him. He knew full well it meant a crashing tumble at the bottom, but he also knew it meant a doubling of his speed—with safety at the end. For, though no definite thought passed through his mind, he understood that it was the village *curé* who carried that little gleaming lantern in the dawn, and that he was taking the Host to a chalet on the lower slopes—to some peasant *in extremis*. He remembered her terror of the church and bells. She feared the holy symbols.

There was one last wild cry in his ears as he started, a shriek of the wind before his face, and a rush of stinging snow against closed eyelids—and then he dropped through empty space. Speed took sight of him. It seemed he flew off the surface of the world.

. . . . .

Indistinctly he recalls the murmur of men's voices, the touch of strong arms that lifted him, and the shooting pains as the ski were unfastened from the twisted ankle . . . for when he opened his eyes again to normal life he found himself lying in his bed at the post office with the doctor at his side. For years to come the story of " mad Hibbert's " ski-ing at night is recounted in that mountain village. He went, it seems, up slopes, and to a height that no man in his senses ever tried before. The tourists were agog about it for the rest of the season, and the very same day two of the bolder men went over the actual ground and photographed the slopes. Later Hibbert saw these photographs. He noticed one curious thing about them—though he did not mention it to any one:

There was only a single track.

THE FIR-TREE

ALL summer 'neath the windy down
The fir-tree wears her dull green gown,
Unnotic'd thro' the radiant hours
By butterflies like bright-wing'd flow'rs,
Pass'd o'er alike by bird and bee,
While all the world's so fair to see.

But when the days towards ev'ning race
The fir-tree gleams in filmy lace,
In gown of silver-flower'd brocade,
With frost-pearls lighting up the shade,
While robin in his lilting rhyme
Calls her the Queen of Winter-time.

AUGUSTA HANCOCK.

" He roars with laughter and calls it 'good as a play '"

CHRISTMAS-BOXES.

BY M. LOANE.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. L. STAMPA.

" CHRISTMAS was a very different thing in *my* day," said the mother of a large family of boys a few days since. " We never did this, we never had that " ; and she gave a list of deprivations which would probably have amazed her well-meaning parents if they had lived to hear it. The boys listened in silence, but when she had finished, the youngest asked, ingratiatingly, " Well, mother, aren't you glad you came to live with us ? "

In all probability average parents always gave their children every indulgence at this season that they could possibly afford, but it tends to become more and more the great period of gift-giving as far as our poorer neighbours are concerned. The great advantage of this is that strong religious associations sweeten and enhance the offering, and enable us to give useful presents to persons whose needs we should not venture to supply in the form of what is commonly called " charity." The chief drawback to an universal season of present-giving is the wholesale and mechanical fashion in which Christmas-boxes are chosen. So much is bestowed on the poor, and yet nothing is more difficult than to get people to individualise their gifts. When persons of leisure offer to give me things " suitable for poor women," I reply : " I do not know poor women. There is Mrs. Herbert Jones, six children, nineteen

shillings a week, lives in a neatly furnished four-roomed cottage ; ambitious, hardworking, irritable. Have you anything that would save labour or gratify her proper pride ? She is a sensitive woman, and feels the small mortifications of poverty intensely. Or, there is Mrs. Robert Brown, lives comfortably in two untidy rooms with a husband and two young children, thirty-five shillings a week : kind-hearted, neighbourly, very idle, intermittent desire to see her children neat and fine and to make her husband proud of them. Can you give her anything that would incite her to industry, or even anything that would please such a generous, amiable woman without encouraging her failings ? "

The clothes are worn, hidden under skirts and pinafores.

A very probable result of this appeal is that both mothers are presented with a bundle of children's clothing, cut from new material, but deliberately cobbled, patched, and misshapen " to prevent pawning." As soon as the lamp is lighted Mrs. Robert Brown dresses up her two plump pretty children in these shapeless wrappings, and they prance about the room for the amusement of their father, who roars with laughter and calls it " good as a play." Then Mrs. Robert flings the garments in a corner, and says she would starve before she saw her children wear clothes " that anyone 'ud be ashamed to hang on a line." She means what she says, but a few days later Bobby playfully throws his shirt in the fire, or Evie makes a wearisome rent in petticoat or nightgown. The garments are replaced from the despised bundle, and the mother has taken a long step on the downward course, which will alienate her husband, injure her children, and turn her slowly, but surely, into an ill-treated slattern of whom the neighbours will say at one moment, " It's shameful the way she gets knocked about," and at another, " She pretty-well deserves what she gets. He was a decent enough fellow when they married."

Mrs. Herbert Jones unpacks her bundle with tight lips and blazing eyes ; her natural impulse is to throw the things in the fire, but if she often gave way to her temper she would not have six living children and a fairly contented husband. The clothes are worn, hidden under skirts and pinafores ; the children may be warmer for them, but the mother's heart is sorer.

There is a lamentable sameness in the Christmas gifts offered year after year to the respectable, home-owning poor, and this lack of variety betrays a lack of imaginative sympathy, or of a per-

sonal, intimate knowledge of the recipients, which will take the place of that inborn grace in the minds of even the most stolid of benefactors. Just as the early economists pictured an economic man appallingly simple in his aims and direct in his methods, so charitable persons seem to picture an uneconomic being whose needs of tea, sugar, coarse grey mufflers and large-size socks are perennial and unvarying. At the present day even the poorest persons are more in danger of having too much tea than too little, sugar has ceased to be a luxury, and feet have a disconcerting tendency to vary in length and in appreciation of second quality Scotch fingering.

Among Christmas presents likely to be of use to hardworking mothers of large families few are more welcome than a box containing some reels of good sewing cotton, needles of a quality rarely bought by the poor, though highly appreciated when they have them, a pair of scissors that will really cut, and some useful paper patterns. Such articles as a teapot with a properly designed spout, a small kettle or saucepan, a few kitchen or

1"Footstools . . . are always welcome."

bedroom towels, are always welcome. If the latter are carefully marked with the recipient's name, their value is enormously increased.

Among the older women who "love a bit of work," but cannot afford the pleasure of any kind of sewing except the most necessary and uninteresting mending and re-making, a simple piece of fancy work and the materials to finish it, or a few balls of wool or crotchet cotton give real pleasure.

Among elderly people footstools, screens to keep off the draught, warm houseboots, gloves, handkerchiefs, pillows with cretonne covers, "contrived a double debt to pay," and hot-water bottles of the safe triangular shape are always welcome. Where there is any knowledge of cooking, packets of groceries, which go a little beyond the traditional tea and sugar, are much appreciated. Books often give immeasurable satisfaction, but to choose them rightly requires more exact personal knowledge than any other class of gift. A very real desire for large print bibles and hymn books, especially hymn books, meets with small response.

Many women take great pride in keeping their house in good decorative repair, and a present of the materials to repaper, repaint, or revarnish a room supplies the most pleasurable occupation that they ever know.

The most useful gifts for chronic invalids are light washable counterpanes, bed tables, bed rests, bed pulleys, and bags to contain the handkerchief and other little necessaries.

"Me dear, I'm keepin' them for me fun'ral."

The houses of the respectable poor are, as a rule, so overcrowded with useless ornaments, and the dislike of anything considered ugly is so great, that one should endeavour to give articles which, while gratifying æsthetic tastes, will yet serve some practical purpose. Needless to say, in this laudable endeavour no unbroken series of victories will be recorded. I once gave a consumptive young dressmaker, whose walls were covered with

dust-traps, a pin-tray, intended to keep the pins from the floor and her mouth and the front of her gown. A few days later I found it hanging in a conspicuous position over the mantelshelf, glued to the centre of a large purple plush plaque. On one occasion, many years ago, I assisted at a distribution of Christmas presents at a ragged school, and have never forgotten the general feeling of awkwardness that arose when a bare-footed boy was called out to receive a pair of gaily-coloured socks.

An old lady on out-relief was supplied by a kindly district visitor with a warm nightdress and white bed-socks. One bitter night I ventured to ask why they were not in use, and she replied, shocked at my extravagance, "Me dear, I'm keepin' them for me fun'ral."

On few points are rich and poor more at variance than as to what constitute the necessaries of decent life. A low-class servant, who by some lucky chance had entered "good service," was advanced a sum of money to buy necessaries, by which her mistress meant such things as neat boots and aprons to support the dignity of her new position. When she returned from an unduly prolonged shopping expedition, the first necessary that she displayed to her astonished employer was a pale pink silk blouse.

"The Dinner to a Thousand Destitute Persons."

It is difficult to have much sympathy with the arrangers of subscription dinners supplied to a thousand destitute men, or children, or aged persons. There is too much waste, and haste, and blowing of trumpets in connection with all these entertainments. If the child guests are, as the newspaper reporters

unfailingly describe them, "pinched and half-starved," what cruelty to supply them with pork pies, plum pudding, and nuts! Surely the real duty of humane persons is not to stuff them to repletion with indigestible food and then dismiss them from sight and thought for the rest of the year, but to discover *why* they are half-starved, and lay the responsibility on the right shoulders? What senseless waste to provide roast turkey and mince pies and tell us not only that the recipients "never taste meat" at any other season, but that they "never know what it is to satisfy their hunger." If they are homeless vagrants, charity of this description simply encourages them to remain in this condition, and to prefer a feast and a famine to daily bread and cheese and a Sunday joint at the bakehouse. If they have homes of their own, any self-respecting person would prefer the plainest of meals in decent privacy to a feast in a public hall—stared at, patronised, photographed, "addressed," and compelled to sit side by side with men whom they know to be rogues and impostors. Men may rightly be called to a public feast because their country delights to do them honour. If they are actually in need of a dinner, it is their fault or ours, and in either case it needs a lengthy reparation.

When shall we earn the blessing promised to him who *considers* the poor?

THE NEW YEAR, 1912.

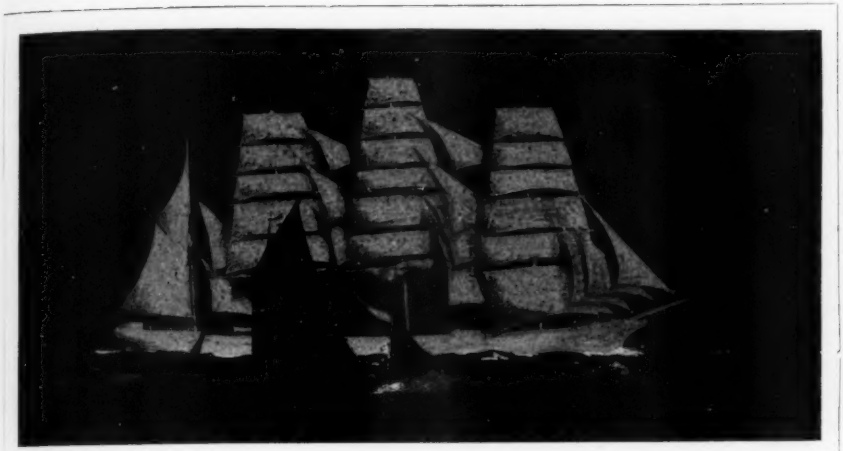
AT your door doth shivering wait
A little messenger of Fate,
So small, so innocent a thing,
Yet beneath his tiny wing
This ambassador doth bear
All the promise of the year.

All the secret of to-morrow,
Tears and laughter, joy and sorrow—
Whatsoever, friend of mine,
He may bring to thee or thine,
Gifts desired or unsought,
He bears to-day my tenderest thought.

URSULA TWENTY.

"THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI."

By Mabuse. Recently acquired for the National Gallery for £40,000 from the Castle Howard Collection.



GHOSTS OF THE SEA.

THE STRANGE THINGS THAT ARE SEEN BY SAILOR FOLK.

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY CHAS. PEARS

HAS the reader ever heard the voice of the night-shrouded sea? Has he heard the wild wail of the raging hurricane and the weird whispers of the ambrosial calm? Has he seen ships creep out of the night when they blot out the stars with their darkling silhouettes, or when the sea and sky are one save for the grey patches of froth left trailing in the wake of breaking seas; has he seen great grey sails ooze out of the fog, or ships stealing across the "moon glade" athwart the glitter of silver cast upon the waters by the imperial votaress, when the rays pierce the sails so that they become gauzy films?

If he knows these things, who shall blame him for not scoffing at the superstitions of those who go down to the sea in ships. Will he not rather give an ear to the tales of strange things seen and believed by sailor-folk?

It is the writer's pleasure (as readers of THE PALL MALL MAGAZINE have had the opportunity of knowing) to waste time sailing the sea in a small craft, usually alone. Upon one of these voyages, having anchored upon the edge of the Nore Sands, he awoke in the middle of the night to find himself enshrouded by a thick fog—eerie enough, the uninitiated reader will doubtless think. Upon looking out at the black woolly wall of fog that surrounded him, he distinctly heard his own name hailed across the water. No other craft was near. This struck him as being so peculiar that he mentioned it to a friend when he arrived at one of the little anchorages, and the skipper of a barge, chancing to overhear, said: "That's the ol' gen'leman of the Nore! Often of foggy nights ye may 'ear 'im a-yelling aht in a kind o' 'elpless way, but sometimes 'is language is something horful. They say as 'e was a first mate wot dropped overboard and swam to the sands, where 'e walked about until the tide rose an' drownded 'im."

Upon another occasion I was sailing along the coast of France, under the

cliffs upon which stands Gris Nez lighthouse, which is about the most powerful light in the world. It was a very dark night, and the revolving rays of the lighthouse kept flashing upon the sails of my boat, lighting them like a powerful searchlight, until proceeding along the course I got out of their range. The strange effect had been forgotten, only to be remembered in time to prevent me from becoming a firm believer in ghosts. There out at sea a ghostly ship was sailing; she was rather too modern, perhaps, to be a real ghost, for every sail set like a glove—ghost ships were never particular in this respect—indeed, she was one of those fine ships out of Glasgow which are the last words in sailing craft.

From apparently nowhere a ship had come—a ship uncannily glowing with an unnatural light. Her sails were surely cobwebs and her ropes were spider strings!

Strange sights and sounds frequently come the way of seafarers.

The grovelling hissing sea, breaking through the night. Its appearance is ghastly grey; it comes from nowhere, it fades away soon after. What could not the imagination weave it into? Shape or sound of spirits chased by the Evil One, the dying wife with arms outstretched, or sound of mother's voice. Moreover, such messages as sea sounds give have frequently come from the dead; the howl of the raging gale, or the murmur of the gentle breeze through the halyards, have borne the departing message in words that were exactly those the lost one whispered last.

The "Flying Dutchman."

To the mind of one who knows the sea, it would seem strange that sailors are not more superstitious than they are, and there are certainly many reasonable excuses for their belief in such stories as that of the *Flying Dutchman*. A patch of swirling vapour through the rigging of his ship upon a dark night. Imagination does the rest; he has seen the *Flying Dutchman*.

Cornelius Vanderdecken, a Dutch navigator of long ago, was making a passage from Batavia. For days and days he encountered heavy gales and baffling head-winds whilst trying to round the Cape of Good Hope. Struggle against the winds as he would, he lost as much on one tack as he gained upon the other. Struggling vainly for nine hopeless weeks, he ultimately found himself in the same position as he was in at first, the ship having made no progress. Vanderdecken, in a fit of wrath, threw himself on his knees upon the deck and cursed the Deity, swearing that he would round the Cape if it took him till the Day of Judgment. Thereupon came a fair wind, he squared his yards and set off, but although his ship ploughed through the seas he made no headway, for the Deity had taken him at his word and doomed him to sail the seas for ever.

Superstition has it that the appearance of the phantom ship leads to certain and swift misfortune.

Old sailors will tell of the ship of the *Flying Dutchman* bowling along in the very teeth of the wind, and of her overtaking their own ship which was beating to windward. Some of them say they have seen her sail clean through their ship, the swirling films of her sails and rigging leaving a cold clammy feeling like the touch of death.

The Wrecker of the Priest's Cove.

Our own coast has its tales of weird things, and incredible stories abound where the scenes lend themselves as suitable backgrounds. Of these the best-known legend is that of the Wrecker of Priest's Cove.

Cornwall in the old days was remarkable for its wreckers, and its rock-bound coast was the scene of many evil deeds. The Priest's Cove wrecker during his evil life lured many vessels to their doom upon the cruel shore by means of a false light hung round the neck of a hobbled horse. To this day the good Cornish folk will tell you of the phantom of the wrecker

"The Flying Dutchman—doomed to sail the seas for ever. Sailors say they have seen her sail clean through their own ship."

seen when the winds howl and the seas rage high, carried clinging to a log of wood upon the crests of the breaking seas, and how it is sent crashing upon the rocks, where in the seething foam it disappears from sight.

The Spectral Shallop.

The wide stretching sand-choked estuary of the Solway has many a ghost story and more than one phantom ship.

The "Spectral Shallop" is the ghost of a ferry-boat which was wrecked by a rival ferryman whilst carrying a bridal party across the bay. The ghostly boat is rowed by the skeleton of the cruel ferryman, and such ships as are so unlucky as to encounter this ghastly pilot are usually doomed to be wrecked upon the sands.

No money would tempt the Solway fishermen to go out to meet the two Danish sea-rovers whose ships, upon clear nights, are seen gliding up one of the narrow channels which thread the dried-out sands, the high-curved prows and rows of shields along the gunwale glittering in the moonlight. These two piratical ships, it seems, ran into the Solway and dropped anchor there, when a sudden furious storm came up and the ships, which were heavily laden with plunder, sank at their moorings with all the villains which composed their crews.

The Kerry Wreckers.

Amongst the rocks upon the rugged coast of Kerry was found one winter morning, early in the eighteenth century, a large galleon, mastless and deserted. The Kerry wreckers crowded aboard, and wild was their joy, for the ship was laden with ingots of silver from the Spanish Main. They gradually filled their boats until the gunwales were almost down to the water's edge, and hastily they pulled to the shore in order that they might return for further ingots before the tide rose and floated the ship away. Nearing the shore a huge tidal wave broke over boats and ship, and when the wave had passed, the horrified women watching on shore saw no sign remaining of boats, men, or ship.

Wild horses would not get a Kerry fisherman to visit the scene of this disaster upon the anniversary of the day the grim tragedy took place, for only bad luck has come to those who have seen the re-enactment of the affair, which Kerry folk believe takes place upon that day.

The Newhaven Ghost Ship.

The Newhaven ghost ship signified her own doom. A ship built at Newhaven in January, 1647, having sailed away upon her maiden voyage, was thought to have been lost at sea, when one evening in June, during a furious thunderstorm, the well-known ship was sighted sailing into the river mouth —but straight into the eye of the wind—until she neared the town, when slowly she faded from the sight of the people who crowded on shore to watch her. The apparition was significant—the ship was never heard of again.

The "Palatine."

The rocky coasts of New England are haunted by many ghost ships. The *Palatine* is the best-known spectre. The coasters and fishermen of Long Island Sound will tell you that when a sight of her is gotten, disastrous and long-lasting storms will follow. The *Palatine*, a Dutch trader, misled by false lights shown by wreckers, ran ashore upon Block Island in the year 1752. The wreckers, when they had stripped the vessel, set her on fire in order to conceal their crime. As the tide lifted her and carried her flaming out to sea, agonising shrieks came from the blaze, and the figure of a woman who had hidden herself in the hold in fear of the wreckers stood out black amidst the roaring blaze. Then the deck fell in and ship and woman vanished.

Bernard Fokke's Compact.

The Dutch seem to have more than their share of sea ghosts, for here is

another. Bernard Fokke, a dare-devil skipper, who in the latter half of the seventeenth century made a passage from Rotterdam to the East Indies in ninety days—a feat in those days which in itself was uncanny and near the miraculous—was so anxious to beat even his own record that he sold his soul to the Evil One. When he came to die no trace could be found of his ship, but his spirit together with that of his vessel was transported to the scenes of his voyages, and was—with only his boatswain, cook, and pilot for a crew—doomed to the everlasting strife of sailing his tattered ship against head-winds which always swept him back.

The Wrecker of the Priest's Cove.

THE WHALER OF NANTUCKET.

The whaling in Nantucket, as you will remember, was in its palmy days carried on almost entirely by Quakers. One Sunday evening a meeting was in progress; the simple service seemed as though it might pass, and the Spirit moved none of the company. The elder friend was just about to offer his hand to his neighbour in the closing of the meeting, when a stranger rose and declared that the Lord's wrath was upon a certain whaling ship, and that he had seen her in a vision descending a huge wave from the hollow of which she never rose. The meeting closed hurriedly, but the speaker could not be found, and the ship was never afterwards heard of.

The Ghostly Ship of Bernard Fokke.

Ghosts of the Marshland.

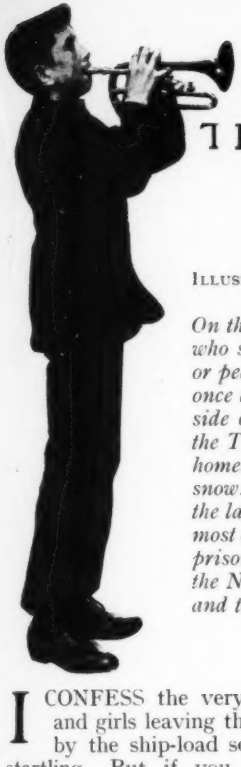
Some of the best ghost stories are those which the writer has heard from the simple folk of the salt marshes. It is hardly possible to describe these dreary districts, for when one has said they are flat, stretching for miles, and rather subject to mists, one has said pretty well all that is to be *said*—the rest must be felt. However, just as there is a call of the sea, so there is a call of the marshland. You shall go into the saltern and feel its moist breath upon your cheek and the breath of its salty winds and the ozone of its calms. You shall be lost in its vastness, and, threading its innumerable twisted narrow waterways, which lead to nowhere, ye shall tread its carpet of scentless flowers. You shall go to its very edge where the sea comes oftenmost, and where the flowers decaying leave their rust-coloured remains. There you shall meet mud, and the cry of the curlew shall mock as you flounder in its filth. The moon shall come up refracted by the mist into unrecognisable shape, which shall be blood colour. You shall be a grey shape, differing little from the common things that are there, for you shall be enshrouded by fog; nay, it shall sink into your very soul, until you are not flesh and bones, but a particle of fog yourself. You shall listen to its silences; you shall be told things by them, and, strong man that you are, you shall be afraid.

Is it to be wondered at, then, that these simple Essex marsh-dwellers remember such tales as that of the young skipper, home from a long voyage, whose haste to embrace his wife, and the babe he had not yet seen, bid him go the nearer way of the marshes? The tale has it that in crossing a narrow gutway, near Pitsea, he sank in the mud. So deeply did he sink that he could not extricate himself; the more he struggled the deeper he sank, and with the horror of knowing that the tide was rising and would come stealing up the creek, he shouted. As the tide rose higher the louder were his screams. The salterns near Pitsea are lonely; the cries were heard only by a half-witted peat-cutter, who often in his less sane moments heard such screams and thought no more of the matter. So the shrieks became gurgles, and by the time the tide had lifted the peat-cutter's punt they had ceased.

The older folk at this stage of the story assume a mysterious air, and, with large-eyed glancings athwart their shoulders, will tell you that the skipper's shrieks are heard on starlit nights as the tide glides up that creek.

So here are my ghost stories, and if I sometimes believe in them when I sail all alone on the midnight deep, you will not laugh at me.

"The sombre chamber was filled from end to end with boys ranged along narrow tables strewn with mugs and the remnants of a frugal meal."



THE CHILD EMIGRANTS.

AN ARTICLE TELLING HOW THEY ARE LEAVING OLD ENGLAND BY THE SHIP-LOAD.

ILLUSTRATED WITH A SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS.

On these long winter nights I often think of some child emigrants who sailed for Canada not very long ago. Sitting before my fire, or peering out of my window into the raw London fog, I see them once again cheering and waving their hands as they lean over the side of the great ship as she moves slowly out of the dock into the Thames. So I find myself wondering how they like their new homes in those vast territories, now white and still, deep in snow. I cannot imagine that they would wish to come back to the land of their birth, where naught but lifelong poverty awaited most of them—nay, perhaps even the street, the workhouse, and the prison. So I think they will spend a really happy Christmas in the New World, and rejoice in the air, the light, the spaciousness, and the high prospects that are before them.

I CONFESS the very idea of boys and girls leaving the Old Country by the ship-load sounds odd and startling. But if you care to hear more you will see them in these pictures, which ought to move, I know, to be in the full tide of popularity, but are at least better than mere words, though I will try to describe them.

I had been asked to a farewell breakfast of child emigrants, and at seven o'clock one morning found myself in a dreary courtyard, in one corner of which stood a dreary building, whose windows were protected by wirework, chipped everywhere, dented in many places, bulging in others, thus showing that the armour was not there without good reason, and must have saved many a long bill from the glazier. In another moment I was in a very sombre chamber buzzing like a hive, filled from end to end with boys ranged along narrow deal tables strewn with mugs and the remnants of a frugal meal. At once I was hailed by the master, and by his directions an active youth, in a pinkish blouse-pinafore reaching down to his knees, poured me out of a tin jug as big as a watering-can a mug full of hot coffee, rapidly cut me from the remains of a loaf two big slices of bread with a prodigal surface of shining margarine, and duly placed the food before me in a quiet corner, where I was glad enough to sink into obscurity and be hidden from all those sharp eyes which seemed like so many gimlets ready to pierce right into me. The master climbed back to his height, and, calling for attention, became himself the target. His is a strange kingdom. Few of those boys there are but have a history already, even the very little boys whose round close-cropped heads scarce rise above the tables, histories which would make you weep, gnash your teeth, and shudder. But away with such sad thoughts this morning, and listen to the few simple and kindly words that fall from the master's lips as he talks to those he calls his "Canada boys," who are distinguished from the rest by the very neat blue serge suits they are wearing. Some are really so small that I can scarcely see them, and the rest are so excited that their emotions are evident by the heaving of their waistcoats.

Then, at a sign, they fell on their

"The sombre chamber was filled from end to end with boys ranged along narrow tables strewn with mugs and the remnants of a frugal meal."

knees (with a tremendous clatter), and prayed, at least I hope so, though it is not impossible that they may have been thinking of earthly things such as horses, stock-whips, bowie-knives, six-shooters, and life on the great prairies of the Wild West as depicted in exciting books and the delightful moving pictures. Prayers being done, the bugler raised his instrument on high and played the first notes of the farewell hymn, and shrill and lusty rang out the words, especially the—well, I was going to say chorus, the words were sung so heartily—"God be with you till we meet again."

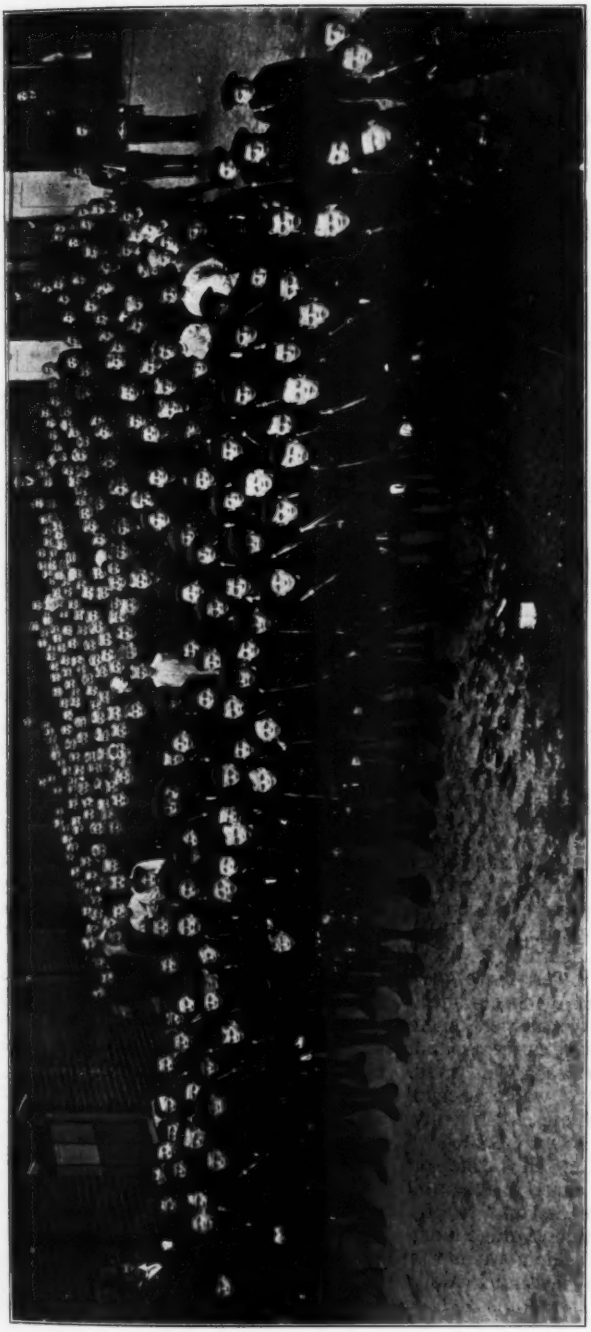
The martial tramp of the legions sounded on the floor; they marched out into the yard. Then rose pandemonic noises. It was evident that their histories did not weigh heavily upon them; they laughed, the sung, they shouted, they whistled, they wrestled, jumped, tumbled, leapt, they jolted each other against the adamant wall and floor, though whether it was the strength of the hot coffee or their natural spirits, or the sailing of the "Canada Boys," I cannot say. But what amazed me most was the extraordinary activity of the cripples amongst them, especially a certain boy on crutches who hopped across the yard ever so much faster than if he had possessed two sound legs of his own, and then converted one of his wooden props into a weapon with which he restrained by a friendly tap the too promiscuous ardour of a comrade, thus converting a leg into an arm, which is a great convenience; nor did clubbed boots weigh down the agilities of others, and woe betide a corn that stood in their way—another of Nature's kindly compensations; and even those whose heads were wrapped round with bandages, although they looked like the wounded from a battlefield, had their hair protected from sly tugs which can be very painful. Speaking of hair, I may say that the fringe seemed to be in most favour, and a forelock drooping gracefully over the forehead has undoubted attractions; but other styles were noticeable, such as the shock, which stands upright over the scalp as if it were watered by surprises; and then there were the round heads, a great number closely cropped in the fashion affected by members of the pugilistic profession, and certainly giving even the smallest boy a most combative appearance. But here, indeed, is the human boy in every variety, the bright and the dull, the solemn and the sullen, the bold and the timid, those who are born to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, others to rise in the world, the stout and the lean, the fair and the dark, showing all the differences that are to be found in the broad shires of England, from most of which they have drifted by good luck into the current that brings flotsam and jetsam into this harbour of refuge. For these are Barnardo Boys, and this big house is one of many homes in which the destitute child finds succour.

There goes the bugle, here come the master and his ministers, high ring the words of command, the tramp of feet, the throng spreads itself into divisions, the boys are drawn up in battalions. "Canada Boys to the front, by the left, march." Now I could see them fairly, a hundred or so, very small, very young, one but five* and the coolest of the lot, put into his place between two protectors of thirteen or fourteen, whose ministrations he quietly indicated that he did not need. They looked as neat a set of boys as you would wish to see, in their blue serge Norfolk jackets, knickerbockers, and caps, whilst round each boyish breast was slung a brand new haversack or satchel containing some small portable property, which might have been solid gold or sparkling diamonds by the care that was lavished upon it. They were called over one by one, for a boy or two might so easily be missed, the ceremony being closely watched by the lines behind them, those who were to remain behind in smoky London.

"Canada must like to catch them young," I said to the master who had just joined me.

"The younger the better—and Canada will only take the pick—I've

* Children are not generally emigrated at so early an age as five. This boy was going out to join his father.



"Canada boys to the front!—as neat as you could wish to see in their blue serge Norfolk jackets, knickerbockers, and caps."

just left a poor fellow who has been thrown out at the last moment, though he was all ready to go." Then, pointing to the Canada Boys with a look of pride, he inspected them for the last time, pushing in toes not quite in line, adjusting an unruly forelock of touzled hair here and there, a haversack, a cap, a button.

An orderly came up to us—or an officer, for they have their ranks and degrees, and love their stripes and badges just as much as bigger people do in the great world outside.

"The vans 'as come, sir," he said, touching his cap, in the tones of one bringing to a general some fateful news.

So more orders followed, and the ranks broke up.

"Get the Canada Boys in," cried the master. Then turning to me, "Now we have just got a minute or two, I should like you to see a Canada outfit."

So I was led to a room where I

saw piled up, one atop of another, rows of stout brown tin boxes, and this is what each of them contained—I think the list will interest you, for it gives you in detail a true account of the first property possessed by a child emigrant when he is sent out into the world to seek his fortune, adding that the above, box and all, cost five pounds. Like Robinson Crusoe, I like to be exact :

COMPLETE CANADA OUTFIT.

1 Overcoat.
1 Suit, complete.
1 Jacket (blue).
1 Pair Trousers or Knickers (blue).
1 Jersey.
2 Ties, bow or scarf.
1 Pair Braces.
1 Cap (blue).
1 Cap (tweed).
1 Cap (storm).
3 Shirts.
2 Undervests for knicker boys.
3 Pair Stockings or Socks.
2 Pairs Woollen Pants.
1 Pair New Boots (in box).
1 Scarf.
1 Pair Gloves.
1 Bible and 1 Marked Testament.
1 Box.
3 Handkerchiefs.
1 Stationery Packet.
1 Tailor's Packet.
1 Brush (hair).
1 Brush (cloth).
1 Comb (large).
2 Pair Laces.
1 True Stories Book.
1 Traveller's Guide.
1 Historical Tales.
1 Text Card (Psalm XIX., verse 14).
1 Pair Cuffs (if possible).
1 Pair New Boots (to travel in).
1 Satchel or Haversack.

I see that the boots and the books have got mixed up a little, but that is only what you might expect even in the best regulated baggage, and those boxes were packed beautifully.

Ah ! we must not linger, there goes the bugle. The sound of cheers shrill and fierce reach us ; we hurried down as fast as our legs could carry us, and were just in time to see a wild mad rush for the boundary wall, reached by lower walls, scaled by jutting points, pipes, and steps. Somehow they clambered on to the edge or ridge, sat astride it, clung to it, until it was lined with heads, and looked very much as Old London Bridge must have done after a rebellion, when the heads were exposed to view as a friendly warning.

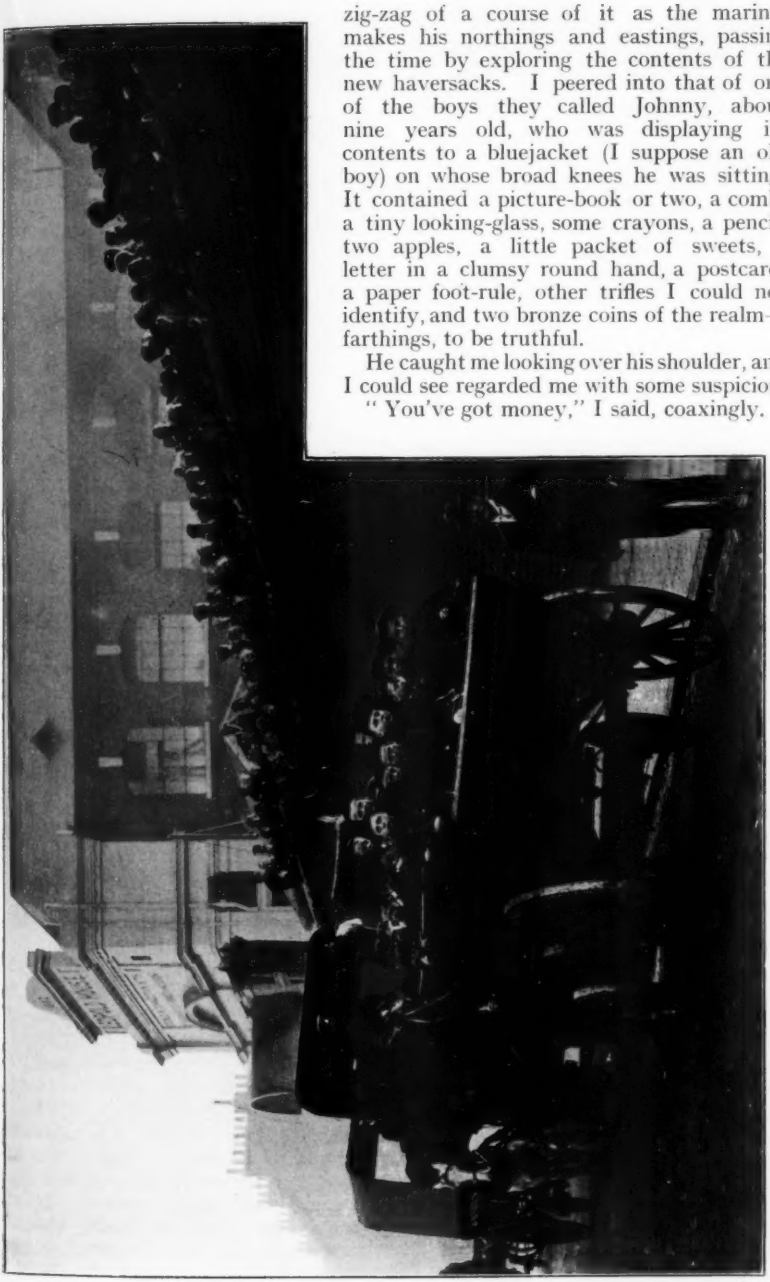
I doubt if even the master himself could have dislodged them now. Every eye was bent on an open cart and two vans hooded over with tarpaulins in which were crowded the Canada Boys. It was an impressive scene, an exciting experience. You might think that eight o'clock in the morning would have been too early for sightseers in this murky street far away in East London, but a little crowd soon gathered at the corner rooted to the spot by the spectacle, a number of dogs, mothers holding babies up on high, a poor pale cripple in a long perambulator on the pavement was lifted up, whilst faces peered out of windows, blinds were hurriedly drawn up or aside, and then a wild volley of cheering rose from the heads on the wall-top, bits of rags fluttered—handkerchiefs, I suppose—hands waved, those who were holding on by them whistled and shouted, even crutches waved to and fro. We were off ! The procession started, and in a minute or two the grim walls disappeared from sight, the serried rows of heads, the waving hands. This was the Canada Boys' "Good-bye," as cheerful as the brilliant morning sun that shone upon us during the journey that was before us. Not a tear glistened in a single eye, in my cart at all events. Our horse—a sturdy veteran who knew his business too well to hurry—engaged all their attentions. He got a little behind in the traffic. But he soon showed that he could trot too when he got into the fairway, and was highly commended for his efforts.

So on our way we joined forces when not divided by the stream of traffic in the highways, or the crookedness of the route, which lay through a thick and tangled underscrub of human dwellings, if I may take a figure from the forest. Drivers of vans and carts and lorries are a stubborn tribe, and yield not the right of way without reason, but even they cracked their whips cheerily, drew up for us with good-humoured smiles at the loads of boys being removed like household effects in furniture vans. So we jogged on, ever steering for the river, but making a

zig-zag of a course of it as the mariner makes his northings and eastings, passing the time by exploring the contents of the new haversacks. I peered into that of one of the boys they called Johnny, about nine years old, who was displaying its contents to a bluejacket (I suppose an old boy) on whose broad knees he was sitting. It contained a picture-book or two, a comb, a tiny looking-glass, some crayons, a pencil, two apples, a little packet of sweets, a letter in a clumsy round hand, a postcard, a paper foot-rule, other trifles I could not identify, and two bronze coins of the realm—farthings, to be truthful.

He caught me looking over his shoulder, and I could see regarded me with some suspicion.

"You've got money," I said, coaxingly.



"Every eye was bent on an open cart and two vans which were crowded with Canada boys."

He looked me coldly in the face, showing that he had been wisely taught not to heed the smooth tongue of the stranger. But he had still much to learn. He was so pleased with his money that he could not keep his mouth shut.

"I've got more than that," he exclaimed.

He would have fallen a ready victim to those who work the "kinchin' lay," which is, you know, snatching bags and things from unsuspicious youth.

I flattered him. I opened my eyes wide with wonder and admiration.

"How much?" I asked in a winning and innocent manner.

"Thrippence."

"A Carnegie!" I murmured. "I wonder if you'd lend it to me! It would be kind of you!"

A subtle smile stole over his face.

"Can't," said he. "It's in the bank—here's my book," tapping a very thin one in the depths of his treasure-house.

So after all he baffled me. I think Johnny will get on.

He had also an inquiring mind. He asked that good-natured, simple soul of a bluejacket if they got hot food on ships. It evidently worried him to know how there could be a fire on a boat which floated on the water. Being assured on this point he wanted to know if there was any fear of the boat turning over. I did not catch the answers, but I hope that Johnny's commendable thirst for facts and the pursuit of accurate knowledge will not lead him to tickling the horses' hoofs to see if they can laugh, or peering down the barrel of a gun to see it go off, as I have heard of other imprudent youths doing.

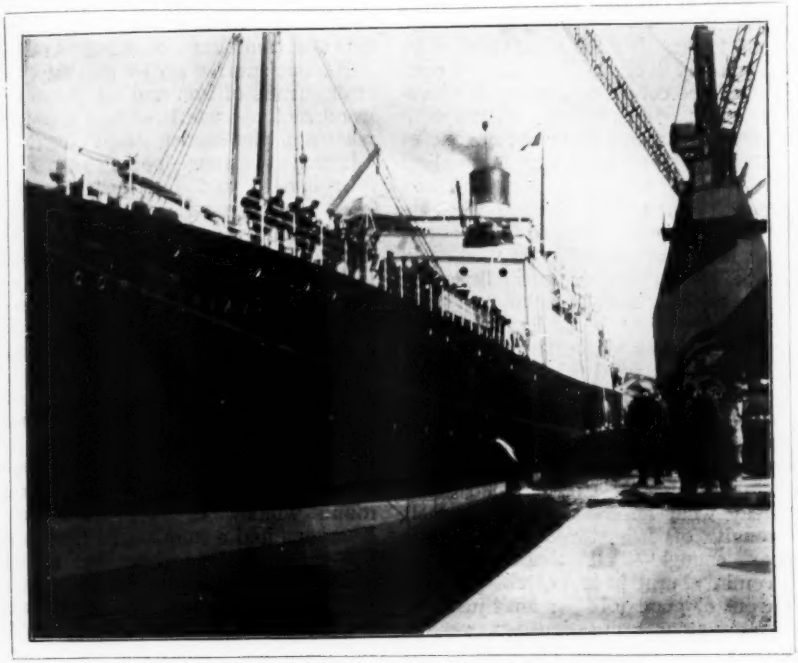
Our cart was still last in the procession, and we were suddenly startled by some cheering from our friends in front. We were descending into a wonderful tunnel looking like the entrance to Fairyland, for the walls were white, and stretching as far as one could see were strings of brilliant balls of electric light. It really was a wonderfully pretty sight, and when we thought we must be nearing the end of it, lo! we only turned a curve, and it stretched as far as one could see again. Rows of exclamation marks!!!! alone would enable you to realise the excitement that possessed us during our passage under the Thames, and the echoes were delightful. At last we met the sun shining through the other side, and rose up into the dock country, water and land mixed up with one another in the strangest way, where masts and funnels seemed to rise out of backyards, and ships looked as if they were built in a row of houses.

So we jogged along, though how our pilots found their way is a mystery to me, for this dockland is a curious region, one of London's many worlds, a place of waterways, bridges, tunnels, unsuspected barriers, queer turnings, many surprises, and inhabited, it seemed to me, by a peculiar race, amphibians, equally at ease on land or water. One of these pages would not hold all the exclamations that all these sights called forth—an ancient wooden ship or two, all patches, like arks, creaking and groaning against the basin walls; a great brown rat swimming for dear life through the scum; ships of iron, smart and rakish, with painted portholes that seemed gaping for guns; hulls, masts, yards, everywhere; steamboats big and little, leviathans and mere minnows, red, black, blue, and a forest of funnels of many hues—and as each one hove in sight rose the cry, "Is it OURS?" The water was very dirty, very dark, but still it sparkled in the track of the sun; sirens were hooting near and far in many notes—all the many voices of the river; flags of many shapes and colours were flying, the wind blew fresh, and raised from the dry land little eddies of jute, spun yarn, and all kinds of rubbish risen out of the holds of ships gathered from all parts of the world, and flying off now glad of their freedom; boats were dodging about, barges moving sluggishly, splash of oar and sweep, hoarse cries of bargee and waterman, rush of steam, groans of crane, clank of hammer, water spouting out of the ships' sides, bales dangling high in the air, chains creaking,

huge ropes whining to be released, straining and tugging at the iron stanchions—this is dockland.

OURS is in view. We passed through the gates, wound our way past bales and stacks of merchandise, and drew up in triumph at a great barrack-like shed. We disembarked, we shook our cramped bodies, we marched in and were put into our proper quarters, the shed being railed off into compartments for all grades of passengers who were going by the good ship *Corinthian* of the Allan Line, whose great sides towered high above us. Here we met other child emigrants, and authorities conferring privately, scanning the lines, and it was here that I met one who looked like a sea captain, with eyes that seemed as if they had spent their time when open in peering through fogs and smelling out icebergs, his face tanned brown as by wind and storm. Indeed, he had crossed the Atlantic, I think, two hundred times, but his business was to convey little emigrants to the new land, and seeing me so curious he did his best to answer the questions with which I plied him.

We boarded the *Corinthian*, and took up a position at the top of the gangway. At its foot was a doctor, and each little emigrant was closely scrutinised ere he stepped on the first rung, tapped and probed and sounded, not for the first time, nor for the second, nor the last, but as my guide said, "Canada will have the pick." It was amusing to watch the ordeal, though none could look on it for the first time without a moistening of the eye, such a trifle is a child, such a strange and wonderful monster is a ship. Some cast looks of awe up at the high wall rising far above their heads, nearly all clutched the gangway rail firmly, and, peering down into the dark water depths, measured each advance to see that the foot was placed precisely on the rung, as if a slip would be fatal—at least nearly all



"The great sides of the good ship 'Corinthian' towered above us."

did, except the boy of five, who marched up as calmly as if he had been going to bed. His appearance on the stage was greeted with general laughter from all, even the rough dockers and sailormen, but he merely regarded the unseemly outburst with indifferent surprise, and, stepping on board, toddled to the middle of the deck as though he had been the captain about to take command, looked round him, opened his haversack, dragged out a huge apple almost as big as his head, turned it round and round for a likely place to put his teeth to, and then deliberately took a bite. He at once became the centre of a group of stevedore's men, great hulking fellows with huge arms tattooed and hairy, one of whom, the biggest, blackest and ugliest of the lot, holding in his hand an iron shaped like an S—that is, having hooks for its ends—was so taken aback that he squatted down on the deck, and, after staring hard at the little boy for a minute, said in a hoarse, dust-choked voice, "Wot, Tommy, you a-goin' to Cannidy? I calls it"—well, he called it some very sulphurous names, to tell the truth, "a thundering shame," let us say—"a thundering shame a-sendin' so many nice little nippers like you to Cannidy, when all them furriners"—I should be sorry to say what he called them, it smelt strongly of brimstone, that's quite near enough—"all them furriners a-comin' pourin' in and drivin' you and me out of good jobs; it ain't justice." Tommy stood quite easy, however, he merely bit at his apple, and only looked up once, I think, with a contemplative stare as though he were weighing the words. "Well," said the stevedore's man, "if you ain't the rummiest little bloke I ever clapped eyes on"—an address evidently intended to show the deepest degree of affection. "'Ere," and feeling in his ragged breeches he dragged out a penny which he dropped into Tommy's haversack, walked off, and dug his hook into a bale as the best means of soothing his savage breast. In spite of the dockland dialect I don't think he was a bad fellow, though a little rough in his manners some would deem him; and he had paid a high compliment to Barnardo's without knowing who makes such good material out of waifs and strays.

The boys had an upper deck to themselves, bounded at one end by the high wall of the upper decks, which, as you know, rise storey above storey on big steamboats; on the other, by all the gear that governs anchors, hawsers, chains, and ropes, whilst a neat set of stairs with balustrades to hold on by led below. Down into these fearsome depths we now descended, not without fear and trembling, for it looked rather dark, but spurred on by curiosity. A strong smell of iron and oil, paint and wood met us; whiffs of new bread, of meat and pies baking swept down dim alleyways; strange-looking men were hurrying to and fro, men in white caps and aprons, sailors in thick blue guernseys, men with black faces, and others in fine uniforms with lots of shining braid and buttons on them. We had got used to this lower deck now, and found it to be a great chamber big enough for football and cricket, with tables running down the middle. All along both sides were the most astonishingly funny bedrooms, with wooden shelves one above the other and round the sides, which were the beds, the whole lighted by a small round window of very thick glass. Everyone had a number, so that there was no confusion; there was a little hospital, a room for the master, a bath-room, endless washing basins and towels, and they were actually laying the cloth for dinner, and the electric balls were alight on the many slim pillars which supported the deck above. The carpenters were still hammering and sawing, but their work was nearly done. These ships are surprising things. Only a few days ago this room was packed full of cheeses and grain, and other merchandise; to-day the freight is human, so sweeping are the changes that have had to be made.

"Do you know the boys?" I asked the superintendent, as we gazed on the interesting scene from a quiet corner.

"Oh, no, but we shall soon be good friends. I have to settle their places

out in Canada," and he touched sheaves of papers he had under his arms ready to deposit in his cabin.

"A boy of five he was, who calm'y toddled to the middle of the deck, and took out of his haversack a huge apple."

"You have places for them, then?"

"More places than children."

"Then they go on the farms?"

"Yes, most in the settled districts of the East—perhaps a few to the West; they become members of the family, and being so young, easily fall into the ways of the country. Canada likes to catch them young, for their ways are not our ways. We used to try and teach them a little farming here; but

even the cows are milked differently in Canada," and he laughed.

"But these small boys don't begin to work at once, surely?"

He laughed again. "Oh, no! they go to school till they are fourteen; but they grow up farmers all the same, and give a hand very soon in all the work, and get used to horses, cattle, pigs, and they have a mammy and a daddy, and perhaps brothers and sisters, perhaps not."

"These you pay?"

"A pound a month, and at fourteen they get wages, and at eighteen 100 dollars, and if they choose can take up the 160 acres free grant."

"That sounds well; but suppose the boy doesn't take to his mammy and daddy, or they don't take to him, or send him to school, or look after him," said I, thinking of stubborn tempers and rebellious spirits.

"But surely you don't think we just drop a boy into a farm and never go near him again! Why, our inspectors visit each one several times a year, and we soon find out if there's anything wrong. But we know our mammies and daddies, or we know about them, so we take no chances. We have a bad boy now and again—a farmer may not prove so good as he's painted, but our failures are not one in a hundred, and we have sent out over twenty-two thousand boys.

"All farmers?"

"No, not all, but most stick to the land; the rest—two or three thousand—and we keep our records—the rest are railway men, engineers, doctors, lawyers, ministers, teachers, travellers, workers on the great lakes, tradesmen, dealers, clerks; and the girls, we can't send them quick enough, they cry out for servants, and in Canada Jill is nearly as good as her mistress I can tell you; they go into shops and houses of business as assistants, typists, shorthand writers, milliners, dressmakers, and they marry, and some come back for a visit, quite fine ladies. . . . Why here come the girls, there's the band—this way," and following him down an alleyway we reached another big room fitted up very much like the one we had just left, and ascended to another part of the deck where were gathered a troop of girls, big and little, over a hundred of them, who had just come aboard—dark girls, fair girls, plain and comely, with hair brown and black and flaxen hanging down their backs, or done up in neat plaits, or cut short, all warmly clad in neat costumes, and not two of them alike, so that they might have come from a hundred homes instead of the one Village Home down by Ilford.

A wonderful place it is, though few people know it, where hundreds and hundreds of girls live in comfortable little cottages which are built round a great green, or are dotted here and there amongst gardens and trees, the remains of Hainault Forest, with a village church of their own, schools, and workrooms, and other useful institutions. So natural it is too, with the baker's cart driving along the road on his rounds, the sound of the milkman's cheery cry, the children skipping and romping on the green, the more mature reading or working under the trees, and little bands released from school trooping home. For each cottage is a home, each has a name, and a pretty one—most of them christened after the flowers, I believe—and each as private as your own dwelling. I knocked at the front door of one called Laburnum, if I remember right. It was opened by a neat little serving-maid in cap and apron and the usual habit of black, and what neater costume can there be? I was ushered into a neat little sitting-room, and the lady of Laburnum Cottage came smiling in. She had scarce spoken when her children, entering by the back door, came running into their own room opposite, homely and comfortable, with books, and toys, and needlework neatly arranged upon shelves divided into compartments, and all greeted my hostess as "Mother." I was permitted to go into the dining-room, the kitchen, the scullery, and even the pantry; busy hands were already at work preparing the evening meal; cleaning, scrubbing, washing,

bed-making—all the arts of housewifery are in practice, and it seemed to me with most enticing results. Ah! here is a living illustration of an ideal community for you, and as I wandered about the road and paths I saw other remarkable evidences of the vast fabric one man can raise in a short lifetime—Barnardo lies buried yonder beneath his statue, rising white against the grove of trees—rooms full of poor distorted ones working at pillow lace, hospital, gymnasium, and other things which would require many pages to describe.

"Here come the girls."

I had seen all these things, so I felt just a little sorry for these girls who were looking about them with curious eyes, possessed by feminine curiosity, full of wonder, for I felt sure

that some of them would wish they were back again in that charming retreat where order reigns and things go like clockwork. But Canada calls, and there are many other waifs and strays ready to step into their places; the bugle had sounded for them to fall into the ranks.

I knew this very well, for I had seen the new arrivals gather together down in grim Stepney, brought from all parts

"I still see rows of child faces peering over the great ship's side."

of England—babes and infants, some orphans, some given up by mothers, good and bad, derelicts of all sorts, poor weeping victims of crooked circumstance, of malign Fate. Had I not followed them from the smoke and darkness of London down to the Village Home, and seen a nursery full of babies taking their afternoon bread and milk, and showing even at that tender age an extraordinary variety of human passions—love, fear, envy, even anger. I hear fond parents sigh to think of these little ones, but by some magic of her own—some invisible essence—the nurse allays the tempers that arise, puts down the little fist, controls the rolling eye, fitful as the winds that agitate the ocean. Is it her mild persuasive eye, her cool white cap and apron, the tones of her voice? I wonder if the fondest parent could have done as much. Ah! who knows that some day, when these islands are called Utopia, the model State will not enact that school-age is weaning time, and education begin in a State *crêche?* I only judge by results. I see no spoilt and pampered misses, no pouting and whimpering, no pertness, no uplifted noses, no sidelong looks of envy, and hear no biting criticisms because one has a blue dress and another a red or

"Dark girls, fair girls, girls big and little."

"With hair brown, black, and flaxen hanging down their backs."

green, one being as good as another. Perhaps society will develop the usual passions. I should stray from the truth, too, if I said I did not detect the feminine passion for appearances, for I saw distinctly combs and little mirrors taken from haversacks with which they too are equipped. Pretty ribbons, too, had been blown awry by the wind and journey, and they too were adjusted; the poise of hats and caps swiftly noted, too. Nay, in spite of her strange surroundings, one little maid had actually got out her needle case and was mending a rent in her petticoat. She was putting the last stitch in when the strains of "Auld Lang Syne" reached us down below; the Barnardo band was playing that famous air above us.

The time was at hand; it would have been inconvenient to be carried to Canada without a change of clothes. But these ships are slow to leave the land. Passengers were still boarding us, luggage was dangling in mid-air, officers and men were hurrying to and fro, hammers and saws were still sounding. I had still ample time to wander about this homely ship, which was not one of your floating hotels, with a score of storeys, in which you never know you are at sea at all, and move about in lifts and revolving staircases. The boys had got quite used to her. They were playing on their deck, gossiping in groups, writing and reading, leaning over the side watching the busy scene, peering up and down the river, sniffing the sharp breeze, picking up the landmarks, and recognising on the misty horizon the dome of St. Paul's, a pale and ghostly white, quivering in the sunlight.

Bells ring. "All ashore" goes the cry. There is such a raising of hands, friends depart, cheers rise from the throats of the child emigrants, here is such a flutter of tiny 'kerchiefs, such a throwing up of caps!

There she goes, and I still see rows upon rows of child faces peering over her sides. Let us wish them a cheerful Christmas in their new country.

C. MORLEY.

A Canada Boy's Outfit.
After a photograph by Herbert Armitage.

The writer wishes to express his obligations for the kind help and various courtesies extended to him in the preparation of the above article to Mr. William Baker, who succeeded the late Dr. Barnardo as Director of the famous Homes for Destitute Children, to Mr. Adam Fowler, the Chief of Staff, to Mr. Owen, Canadian Superintendent of the Emigration Department, to Mr. Armitage, Superintendent of the Home described, and to Mr. Godfrey, Governor of the Ilford Village Homes. The photographs were specially taken by Reginald Haines.

THE LOST ART OF THE BALLROOM.

AN INTERVIEW WITH A MASTER OF DANCING.

Proper method of holding partner (with improved style for lady, illustrating the graceful effect of holding the dress instead of linking her partner's arm).

A GREAT change has come over the ballroom. Dancing is no longer the graceful art it was. The mazurka, as delightful a measure as feet have ever stepped, is dead. The quadrille has gone to keep it company in the shades. The polka is dying. The Lancers has been practically banished from the ballroom.

Every dance but two or three in the programme to-day is a waltz. But yet, as every authority will tell you, there is very little good waltzing. The attempt to introduce the Boston, a delightful form of the waltz when well danced, has been condemned by the American Society of Dance Teachers because it is not the Boston at all, but merely a grotesque and graceless perversion of the true dance. In the various forms of the Boston at present in vogue the partners hold each other badly, and the chief aim appears to be to chase up and down the room.

The other day I had an opportunity of discussing the lost art with a master of dancing, Mr. R. M. Crompton, a past president of the Imperial Society of Dance Teachers, which was founded seven or eight years ago with the object of advancing the art of dancing.

"Yes," he agreed, "grace has left the ballroom altogether."

"What is the reason?"

"Because it has been ousted by football. The winter sport is insisted upon as part of a boy's education by every schoolmaster; but dancing in boys' schools in this country is discouraged. There was a time when dancing was part of every gentleman's education. It is so no longer. Only football is compulsory nowadays."

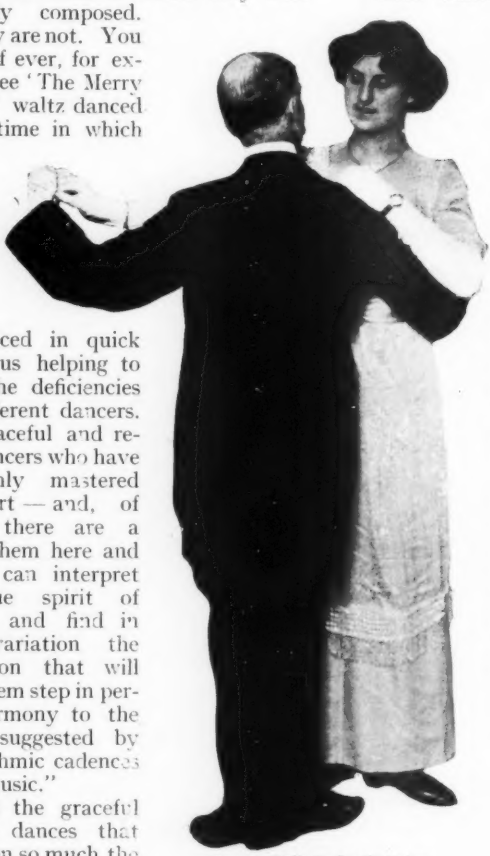
"But girls," I said—"they still learn dancing in their schools. Have they no influence when they grow up and enter the ballroom?"

"In most girls' schools, it is true, dancing forms part of the instruction, and it cannot fail, especially where there have been classes for fancy dancing, to promote grace and beauty. But its effect in after years is too often destroyed by the fact that so many

men enter the ballroom who have never seriously studied dancing as an art, and regard it only as a pastime."

"Should not these fascinating slow-time waltzes from musical comedy do something to restore a decaying art?"

"They should, if they were danced in the slow time in which they were originally composed. But they are not. You rarely, if ever, for example, see 'The Merry Widow' waltz danced in the time in which it is played for the stage. As a rule, these waltzes are danced in quick time, thus helping to cover the deficiencies of indifferent dancers. Only graceful and refined dancers who have thoroughly mastered their art — and, of course, there are a few of them here and there — can interpret the true spirit of melody, and find in every variation the inspiration that will make them step in perfect harmony to the moods suggested by the rhythmic cadences of the music."



Correct Attitude for Waltzing.

"And the graceful Russian dances that have been so much the rage in London—have they, too, no influence in the ballroom?"

"No; not in the ballroom. The popularity of the Russian dancers in this country has only demonstrated the development of a higher taste for dancing. That there is a higher taste is undoubted, but it wants cultivating by those who dance."

"How do you suggest it should be cultivated?"

"Let dancing be taught in boys' schools in this country, as it is on the Continent, as well as in girls'. The boy who learns to dance becomes just as keenly devoted to the art as the girl, and his interest in it ripens rather than diminishes as he grows up."

"And what is the effect of this system in continental cities so far as you have observed it?"

"There is still grace in their ballrooms, there is a pleasing variety in their programmes, and there is no disparity in the numbers of the sexes, such as one finds only too often in this country. At the Hague, for example, I have seen as many as four hundred boys and girls dancing at the same ball, there being present almost as many boys as girls. And it is the same there when the boys and girls grow into men and women. Look, too, at the variety of dances they have. Here is a programme of a dance given not so long ago at the Hague:

1. Polonaise.
2. Polka Mazurka.
3. Kreuz Polka.
4. Waltz.
5. Regal.
6. Quadrille (Lancers).
7. Pas des Patineurs.
8. Tantivy.
9. Pas de Quatre.
10. Waltz.
11. Berolina.
12. Française.
13. Pas de Bohemienne.
14. A Frangésa.
15. Waltz Minuet.
16. Kreuz Polka.
17. Pastorale.
18. Waltz en Carré.
19. Waltz.
20. Academie Waltz.
21. Arcadienne.
22. Berliner.

"The programme contains eight of my own dances, the Regal, the Tantivy, the Pas de Quatre, the Berolina, the Frangésa, the Waltz Minuet, the Waltz

en Carré, and the Arcadienne. I teach my pupils these dances, and they find their way to the Continent. Perhaps the time will come when they will be

Two objectionable methods of holding the partner which are frequently seen in the ballroom.

seen in our own ballrooms, but this, at any rate, is not the day for variety."

"And yet there was a time, was there not, when the English ball programme was as varied as any on the Continent to-day?"

"Yes; but that was the time, nearly half a century ago, when the art of dancing was at its height in England, when, as I said just now, every gentleman learned to dance, and every lady preserved a graceful deportment. Here is a typical programme of an English country-house dance in the year 1867:

1. Grand March and Country Dance.
2. Quadrille.
3. Polka.
4. Quadrille (Lancers).
5. Schottische.
6. Country Dance.
7. Waltz.
8. Quadrille (Freebooters).
9. Mazurka.
10. Galopade.
11. Galop.
12. Quadrille (Double Communities).
13. Waltz.
14. Country Dance.
15. Quadrille (Lancers).
16. La Varsoviana.
17. Quadrille (Caledonians).
18. Waltz.
19. Quadrille (Flora).
20. Schottische.
21. Quadrille (First Set).
22. Country Dance (Sir Roger de Coverley).

"Why have all the square dances and most of the others dropped out of

our programmes, and why are the Lancers practically dead?"

"Because they degenerated into a romp, and the best people would not tolerate them. Sometimes they were even worse than a romp, and many serious accidents happened. Even as recently as last winter a lady had concussion of the brain owing to an accident in the third figure of the Lancers. Falling, she was dragged along the floor, and actually kicked on the head—of course, by accident—by one of the gentlemen who was dancing. Nor is it only the gentlemen who are always to blame for these misfortunes. Some ladies—of course, no self-respecting lady ever does it—actually lend themselves to this graceless form of dancing by springing up from the floor to enable their partners to swing them off their feet."

"But don't you find on the Continent, too, some extravagances of style?"

"You do find them here and there, of course, and there are amongst certain circles on the Continent, no doubt, dances that would never be tolerated in any English ballroom. The general standard, however, is high, and the rules that are enforced, especially in Germany, are often most rigid. In Germany, indeed, especially at the Court balls, one finds the best dancing and the most perfectly arranged programme.

Another incorrect style of holding the partner.

"The German Emperor will not allow any officer to attend the State balls unless he has learned to dance well, and has also learned something more than the waltz. This is the programme which was given in Berlin by the Emperor in honour of the visit of King Edward and Queen Alexandra in 1909. You see it contains my Minuet Waltz again:

Waltz, "Midsummer."
Minuet, "A La Reine."
Polka, "Rosey."
Lancers, "Hussaren."
Quadrille, "Thormann."
Galop, "Krieg's Abendtewer."
Old French Dance, "Prinzen Gavotte," composed by His Royal Highness Prince Joachim Albert of Prussia.
Lancers, "Cavalier."
Quadrille, "Herzog."
Waltz, "Florodora."
Gavotte, "Die Kaiserin."
Minuet Waltz, "Manfred."
Galop, "Petersburger Schlittenfahrt Schlussreigen von Dittersdorf."

"I wrote to King Edward, on his Majesty's return from Germany, expressing the gratification which was felt by the Imperial Society of Dance Teachers at the particularly varied character of this programme, contrasted with those in this country, and our confidence that, if he would graciously deign to follow the splendid example set by his illustrious nephew, not only would a boon be conferred upon the profession of dancers generally but it would also materially assist in restoring the art of dancing to its former high status

by encouraging a higher standard in its cultivation and execution.

"His Majesty, who it was always understood deplored the decay of dancing, graciously acknowledged the letter, but it was too late in his reign for the suggestion then to bear fruit. If only, however, the present Court would set the example of variety in ball programmes in this country, the rest would be easy, for Society would be bound to follow, and the art of dancing would be cultivated again by all classes."

"Failing this example and the instruction of our boys in dancing, is there no other way of restoring grace to the ballroom?"

"Yes, it could be done if hosts and hostesses would only use the same discrimination in inviting guests to a ball as they exercise in arranging parties for bridge and shooting; that is to say, by inviting those only who are properly qualified to participate in the pleasures. That would mean, of course, that every man would have to learn to dance."

"And what would be the position, say, of the man of forty who has never been properly taught the art of dancing—is he too old to learn?"

"No; nor is a man of sixty or even of seventy too old. I have myself had pupils at that age. No man of forty is too old to learn, for ballroom dancing is not beyond the capacity of anyone."

"How long does it take a man of middle age to learn to dance well?"

"It depends entirely upon his temperament and application. Generally speaking, a course of a few lessons under a good master is sufficient to teach any man to waltz correctly. And if he can only waltz his partner will forgive him all the rest!"

"What, then, in your judgment, are the golden rules by following which we may reach perfection in waltzing?"

Bad form in the ballroom.

"I consider, as I wrote some time ago in my Treatise on Dancing, that the acme of good waltzing is that which combines graceful movements with accurate time, and yields the highest degree of enjoyment. If you wish details, I would suggest the following—namely:

1. An elegant bearing.
2. Correct time.
3. Strict adherence to the fixed principles of dancing.
4. Distinct articulation of the steps.
5. Due regard to the position of the feet.
6. Faithful reflection of the co-ordinate parts.
7. Pliant action.
8. Proper accentuation.
9. Evenness of balance, and
10. The judicious introduction of expressive motion in harmony with the character of the music.

"Is this perfection attained?"

"It is attained; but not, of course, so widely as it should be. If you wish to find the best dancing in this country you must look for it amongst the middle and professional classes. You will not find it, as a rule, amongst the upper classes, for they have not the time to learn, nor will they take the trouble. Even they

who learn generally do so in a superficial fashion."

"Do not military men dance well?"

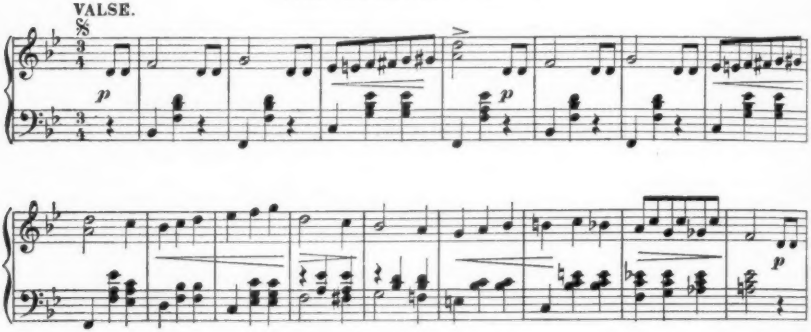
"Not as well as naval men; they dance excellently."

"Why?"

"In most of the naval colleges they have weekly classes for dancing. And that brings us back to the basic fact that they who would really dance well must learn to dance when they are young. Moreover, as the late Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson remarked in one of his lectures on the science of recreation and health, 'Dancing is specially adapted for the young. Children are made to dance. It is a part of their nature, and no school ought any day to break up without indulging for eight or ten minutes in a good dance, for dancing develops the physical capacities, in respect both to grace of attitude and power of limb.'"

K. MARSDEN.

THE CECILIAN WALTZ.



The Cecilian Waltz invented by Mr. R. M. Crompton. It combines the usual Waltz movements with the Boston and other steps. Music by Gertrude Meller.

THE MOUSE BEHIND THE WAINSCOT

BY MARTHA KINROSS.

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD SOMERVILLE.

HERNDON met Christmas this year in a sullen and resentful humour. With such anniversaries the hand of Time pressed open his wound, too new as yet for healing, but which the ordinary seasons, when work could go on uninterrupted, left bearably quiescent. A holiday, a Christmas holiday, however he might try to ignore it, bustling, officious, offensively cheerful, quite regardless of whether he were in sympathy with it or not, forced its way into his routine, opened doors he had closed, and wakened echoes to prove the deadly silence that had settled in the deserted places of his life.

He had bought a present or two for friends, and a few toys for his little nephews and nieces. He was deprived of the pleasure of seeing the kids explore their parcels, for estrangement had come between his sister and himself. She had sided, unnaturally he thought, and in defiance of the ties of blood and the common heritage of childhood, with Miriam, his wife. There was nothing to take sides about really, no acute issue that might be compromised or abandoned—he would to God there were—but only the dull dissonance of altered loves.

One gift purchased last year had embodied the whole spirit of his Christmastide; the omission of it now made him feel he had bought nothing; that the time found him empty-handed, empty-hearted. From the happy, confident crowds of Christmas shoppers emanated a palpable atmosphere of the domestic affections; it was like an effluence filling the frosty air, which had its grosser material counterpart in the spiced steam of puddings that breathed from kitchen chimneys and area gratings. The world seemed more expansively confidential, seemed to wear its intimate affections more openly for this short interval.

The shops and streets made him wince. In the country he might escape most of it, and Hillard had asked him to spend Christmas with them at Farleigh, but they had a house-party, people he knew—the Nortons, the Graces, Cecil Rawlins, and Miss Everhardt. His story, their various conjectures, impressions, and opinions regarding himself and his wife, would give relish to the talk whenever his back was turned. The sole explanation he had to offer—that his wife was in Italy with friends—would blind no one to the breach, would only set them hunting more keenly for the cause.

No, if he had no home of his own, he would not spend this Christmas under another man's roof. The body of a house he had, like a dead or dormant thing, wanting light and warmth and life. He had left the housekeeper in charge, old Mrs. Pluckley, with her grandson, a lad of fifteen

years. Suddenly he had an inspiration. Why not reanimate that house and spend his Christmas there? He had no wife, but he might have a bachelor house-party, all the merrier, more unrestrained. He would have Rivers, that confirmed misogynist, and Brethrington, who was divorced. He reviewed his short list of unmated or mismated friends; out of this wreckage of matrimonial hopes he would build his Christmas bonfire, that like driftwood would burn brighter for the salt wherewith it was seasoned—the brine out of life's bitter seas, the salt of long-dried tears. He interrupted his lachrymose vein with a shout of self-derisive laughter—Brethrington was more apt to blaze like a hasty-pudding with an alcoholic flame.

He set about putting his plan into execution at once, but midway in the writing of his first note of invitation it struck him that as a preliminary he had better run down to Chelmhurst and see how things stood there, and what cheer Mrs. Pluckley could provide for them.

The next afternoon found him in a second-class smoking-carriage of the South-Eastern Railway. They always got into a smoking-carriage, even when Miriam was with him. She didn't mind the pipes. It was tea-time when he reached his station, but light enough as his fly turned in at the gate for him to notice an empty bird's-nest in the lilac bush, all its privacy exposed now that the leafy screen was gone, and a line of Coleridge's, "Sad as a last year's bird-nest filled with snow," sprang into his mind. It seemed to him symbolic.

She and the swallows were gone together. Here it was cold and grey and dreary; they were with the summer in the South. The swallows were part of those happier days. Roaring up the chimney with a sound like windy flame, circling, dipping, flashing their breasts against the sun, uttering all the while a throaty gurgle of song, they bathed the house in their aerial joy. *She* said they were the only birds that took a conscious pleasure in flight. He looked up at the chimneys, and was surprised to see that from three of them smoke rose.

Old Mrs. Pluckley, somewhat long in answering his summons, guardedly drew back the bolts. Yet as she bobbed to him in the hall, he noted that she was capped and aproned and trim as ever. Impossible to take her by surprise after long years of service. She led him to the dining-room, where a fire was burning, "To dry out the damp. The morocco on the chairs was looking mouldy, sir," she explained.

Somehow he felt that he intruded. A sense of preparation or of expectation was in the air. He caught sight of holly and mistletoe above the shelf of the great fireplace. Pluckley might almost have had a telepathic prevision of his errand. And her further explanation that she couldn't abide to see the place looking so doleful and vacant at this time of year did not convince him. He felt that though fluent, she was surprised and guilty. Perhaps she was making ready to entertain a party of her own relations or friends over Christmas. Well, if the owners left the place thus desolate, he could not blame her. He had pity on her discomfiture, and went upstairs to his study.

Thither Pluckley presently followed him to know where he would sleep. He said in his own room, of course. "I thought, perhaps, as the mistress's room was aired and warmed, sir . . ." He silenced her with a sharp negative. What ailed the woman? She hovered about as if she were bursting with confidences or confession. He did not want her, poor old soul, to confess to him. After she had left the room, it occurred to him that it might have been a question she wished to ask—a question about his wife, to whom she was devoted.

He wondered as he sat there trying to read, why he had voluntarily subjected himself to such torment, to this long evening in a haunted house. Memories of other evenings defiled between him and the page. His heart remembered too well everything she did and said. And fancy played him strange tricks. He could have sworn

that once he heard the soft rustle of her skirts passing his door.

At last, to drive home the association that tortured him, and exhaust its possibilities of pain, he rose and lighted a candle and went to her room. All was in order, and as she left it. The coverlet was spread upon the bed, a vase of flowers from the greenhouse stood on her dressing-table. Old Pluckley kept it as if she might return to-morrow. He preferred this theory; he did not like to think that one of the housekeeper's friends might sleep in Miriam's room. It seemed to him that the very fragrance of his wife's presence, that faint, aromatic freshness of *vêti-vert* in which she kept her linen, hung in the air. Almost he expected to see her little slippers lie huddled in the middle of the floor, where she had kicked them, like two paired grey doves.

Some impulse, as he was going to bed, prompted him to try the door between their rooms. He found it fastened, and smiled grimly at the coincidence. How well he remembered the first time it was thus—the sharp finality of that click of the key in the lock. He slept badly, and once awoke to the vivid imagination that he heard from the next room the low broken sound of weeping in the night, as he had heard it one time before, and had arisen and shaken the knob of the door, calling "Miriam, Miriam," and had got no answer, but had felt how she held in her breath.

It even came to him, in one of those fantastic fears that haunt the midnight, that his wife might be dead, that some sudden accident might have befallen her, and that he was now receiving a psychic impression of the fact. This he dismissed as nonsense, knowing that they would wire him immediately.

His suspicion of the festivities planned by Mrs. Pluckley, and of the interruption his visit was to them, was confirmed by her manner while she waited on him at breakfast. She scarcely tried to conceal her profound despondency and disappointment. The liberality of the tip he placed in her palm moved her to gratitude, but not to joy.

On the way to the station compunction seized him. Some of that pity for himself with which he was surcharged overflowed upon Pluckley. Was she, too, not abandoned, deserted, left with the empty shell of a house when she was entitled to a home? Did she not live with that abiding sense of absence and neglect in those dark rooms that hungered for sunshine and voices, to be lit by Miriam's golden head, to be showered with her diffusive gaiety? And now when the old woman had planned to import a little of the spirit of Christmastide into them, he had suddenly appeared and upset her apple-cart. He thought compassionately of her frustrate preparations. He would go back forthwith and tell her she might have a friend or two in to Christmas dinner, and even to stay with her in the servants' wing, if she liked; the house was big enough, they wouldn't be in his way. He could catch a later train to town; it didn't matter. He told the driver to stop, opened the door, and sprang out. "I've forgotten something," he said. The cabby made to turn the horse's head, but Herndon checked him.

"You go on with my luggage to the station. I'll catch the 12.15 instead."

He cut across fields, some brown with stubble, some green with winter wheat, and climbed the stile that brought him into that long, narrow wedge of woodland skirting his meadow, and so to the rear of the house.

In the shrubbery Tomasino met him, the black cat, between whom and himself there stood an ancient feud. He disliked cats' eyes; a dog's eyes told you everything, a cat's eyes watched you and told you nothing; a cat's eyes shut against light, and were receptive only to darkness. At this hour of the day the yellow curtains were close-drawn, and Tomasino spied upon the world through knife-blade slits, though even at twilight, when the slits widened orbically, he was scarcely less secretive and inscrutable.

From the first the little beast had been a trivial but sufficient source of

disagreement. Herndon had objected to Miriam's carrying about a fat slug of a kitten, lavishing kisses and caresses upon it. Ridiculous desecration it seemed to his mind, dwelling prophetically upon deeper uses for his wife's tenderness, and the hope of seeing her with children in her arms. But now in his general mood of softness and concession he made overtures.

"Tomo! Tomo!" he called. "Hello, old fellow!"

Tomo lifted the "patines of bright gold," hard little yellow discs, and regarded him. More than ever it seemed that the cat was in possession of some secret and superior information. And then, whisking out of reach of Herndon's propitiatory hand, the creature raced across the lawn and launched himself joyfully up a tree.

"Well, you needn't be so cocky about it, you beggar; you haven't got her either," Herndon said.

Tomo slid down, trotted back gingerly, and with tail still aloft, feathery, and elate, led the way down a hedged path, stopping half-way and looking back to see if Herndon followed.

"He wants me to come. What's he got there, I wonder, in the summer-house? Kittens? No; he's the wrong sort for that."

From Miriam's lap Tomasino signalled his triumph but the flash of a second. Brushing the cat aside she rose hurriedly.

"I—I thought you had gone," she stammered.

"I came back," he answered; and then, "So you knew I was here all along?"

"I knew you were here," she admitted. "How could I help knowing?"

"And you never made a sign! Never said a word—not so much as 'How are you?'"

She was silent.

"And Pluckley—that I was considering to the extent of coming back to do her a kindness—Pluckley deceived me also!"

"Don't blame her, Geoffrey. Poor old thing, she was dying to tell you. She begged me with tears in her eyes. It almost broke her heart to let you go. When I saw you just now I thought that after all the temptation had been too strong for her and she hadn't played fair."

"She's the only one of us who has any wisdom. She can't bear to look on, I suppose, at two people chucking their chances away; throwing happiness out of the window. She's old, and she knows that it doesn't fly in again."

"It is love that is said to fly out of the window, isn't it?" amended Miriam.

"Poverty hasn't come in at the door—not what most people would call poverty," he answered.

"No; but pride has."

"Your pride, Miriam, is so towering it couldn't come in at the door without stooping, and it doesn't stoop."

"And yours," she retorted, "has knocked a hole in the roof with its head."

An accusatory smile played round his mouth. "What was it but your wicked pride that kept you from showing yourself last night?" he asked. "I felt all the time that you were there. I felt it through doors and walls. . . . I went into your room."

"I know. I slipped into the cupboard and watched you through the crack."

"In the night I tried your door. It seemed to me that I heard weeping."

She looked down, and the discolouration of recent tears upon her eyelids betrayed her to him.

"Why did you weep, Miriam?"

"Do you suppose that I am particularly happy—remembering?"

"I thought you had only to go away to forget."

"I went away for peace. You come to feel that you want peace more than anything in the world."

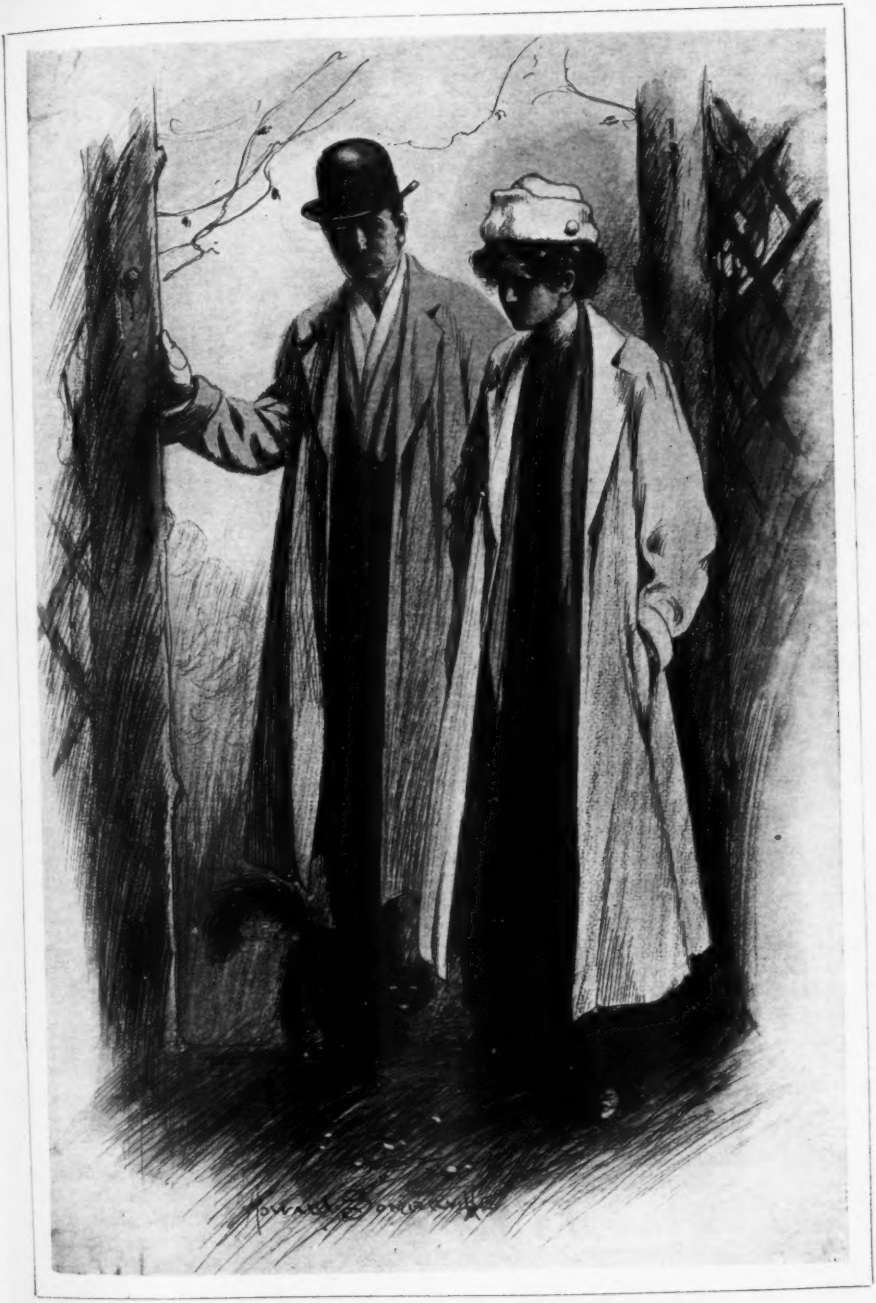
"And did you find it?"

"Outwardly—not within."

"Why did you come here like a ghost?" he inquired.

"I am a ghost. Don't they come back after their lives are lived to where they have been unhappy?"

"You have been happy, too. We were happy here sometimes—God knows we were."



"The discolouration of recent tears upon her eyelids betrayed her."

"But it was a failure. You said it was a failure," she reminded him.

"We never tried it long enough, dear, to know whether it was a failure or not. One year—what is a year? I sat there last night re-living it all, piece by piece, and I saw the mistakes. And I begged, in my heart I begged, for another trial. I sat there in the silence in the midnight, and all our surroundings spoke to me of you—of ourselves. This dear old house that has held so much life and so much strife, perhaps, and looked on birth and death and marriage and the sacred things, grew vocal and preached to me. . . . As I say, what is a year, and the first year of married life especially, which everybody says is the hardest? Love begins in a humility that is overdone, excessive; it can't last, and after marriage our reassertive egos come together with a clash."

"I haven't any ego," she said abjectly.

His lifted brows were eloquent of irony.

"I did have—a great big one. I went away, and then I found I wasn't interested in myself. Myself was shrivelled up somehow. I couldn't live with you, and I couldn't live without you."

"Thank God!" he said, and caught her to him.

"I discovered one thing last night while I was in hiding," she went on the moment she was free for speech again. "I used to demand so much, and now I should be content to live like a mouse behind the wainscot, unnoticed and neglected, just to hear your footstep in the passage, on the stairs, all your comings and goings—just to know you were in the same house with me."

"You neglected and unnoticed!" he cried.

When it was long past the luncheon hour they heard Pluckley's voice in the shrubbery, plaintive and protesting, calling upon her mistress to come and eat. To eat at regular and established intervals being, in Pluckley's estimation, one's solemn duty to oneself and others, whether one swallowed lumps in the throat or not.

"Won't she be surprised, and won't she be delighted, the dear old thing," said Miriam. Demurely she added, "What about your Christmas house-party, Geoffrey?"

Promptly and ungratefully he consigned his guests to a place more noted for its hospitality than its accommodation. Aloud he said devoutly, "Thank Heaven, I haven't invited one of them."

MIDWINTER.

MIDWINTER morn, yet from the tall elm ringing
Comes the storm-thrush's wild, sweet whistle, bringing
Hopes of a glad young year to new life springing
Into my heart.

Midwinter in my lonely soul, and stinging
Cold in my barren heart; till laughing, singing,
Your messengers of love and trust came winging
Into my heart.

ERNEST BLAKE.

THE CHRISTMAS TRIP.

BY W. H. HULTON.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. E. HODGSON.

The bit of Christmas green at the mast-head.

TO the big fishing companies working in conjunction with the men's combines, Christmas week is the slackest time of the year, consequent on the lay-up for the seasonable festivities; but to the small trawler, with her crew working on the share, it spells a good market with prices ruling high owing to the lack of competition.

So when chilly winter has laid a heavy hand on the countryside and the gulls are screaming inland, when even the squabby Dutch boats have hawked their way from crest to crest of the wastes of grey seas to the shelter of some low-lying spit for the feast of Noël, you may meet trawlermen swinging up street with bundles of green beneath their arms, but there is an unusual briskness down along the quayside. The coaling tugs are busy alongside, and the iceboats bob to the racing tide-rip as they pass their freight baskets aboard.

"Ye see, b'y," explained old Colley Parkins of the *Morning Bright*, "it ain't as we wants t'go t'sea; a Chris'mus lay-up wi' the missus an' the kids is t'be sorter preferred to haulin' half-frozen gear outside; but there, it ain't us as settles it, 'tis the folks as eat fish. They wants it Chris'mus same's any other time, an' when the big bo'ts lay up we nips in an' takes our bit o' the prime prices. Oh, no, we don't forget anythin', don't ye be feared; we has our Chris'mus time, after a style, outside. Ye'd better come along an' see."

It was a cold blustery day when the *Morning Bright* warped seaward. The skipper, his mate, and the hands came aboard muffled up in new jerseys and neckerchiefs, obviously Christmas presents; they were all very cheerful, and their shirtbags, slung over their backs flanked by the huge greased thigh boots, were bulkier than ever. In the usual course of things a smack puts to sea without much ceremony or leave-taking, but quite a respectable crowd came to see us off. The skipper's "missus" and some of his children, the mate's mother and his sister, Ockey, the third hand's newly-wedded wife,

and the deckie's latest sweetheart. Danny the cookboy was a west countryman, without any friends except the old body who did his mending, but even he was not alone, for the parson up at the mission shelter, a ruddy-faced skipper who had once sat in the seat of the scorner, but who had now appreciated the error of his ways, came down to bid him good luck, and as we edged away from the quay the sturdy little man, beaming all over with benevolence, heaved a big parcel aboard.

"From the miss'n," he shouted down, "God bless ye, an' good luck."

Then we dropped seaward with the half-ebb. The quay died away, a grey wall aflare with bright specks of waving colour, and the nose of the *Morning Bright* began to dip to the restless waters of the North Sea. Halfway up to the grey line of the horizon, that merged almost imperceptibly into the aching stretch of water, lay the eddying swirl of the banks cut across by a string of black, bobbing buoys marking the passage or "gat" between the shoal water and the "navigations" outside.

While in the comparatively calm water inside, the hands bustled round and made things shipshape. The big mains'l went clanking skyward, and the peak set to the satisfaction of the fastidious Colley, while the jibs were made fast and the pennant halliard pulled till the pennant flew bravely to the wind, drumming through the top gear. The skipper put his course straight for the bobbing buoys.

"We're runnin' due east'rly," he explained to me with the big tiller pressed up against his thigh, "times 's been bad, but mebbe they'll look up wi' Chris'mus, what say, b'y? Anyway, we'll give 'em a chance an' go over to they Dutch banks."

We danced up alongside the buoys where the shoals eddied foul and yellow, till we struck the navigations outside, where the big coasters ply up and down. Then right across till the low coast faded away a blur in the darkness of the shortening day. A big tramp, plunging heavily north, was the only other sign of life, and in a few minutes her smoke trail had died away and left our rolling smack to the undisputed possession of the turbulent sea and the rising north-east wind.

A few miles across the navigations and we had struck the deep sea banks that stretch northward to the Dogger; the heavy gear dropped sullenly overside, a huge forty-foot trawl beam with a tremendous bag of netting attached, the whole lot worth, perhaps, some seventy pounds, swinging to a thick hempen warp made fast to a bollard amidship.

With the wind came down a sleet shower, veiling all in a driving mist of tingling frozen snow, and piling up a two-inch depth of slush all along the reeling deck, save for a bare spot around the stumpy funnel that spewed out a foot-and-a-half of flame and smoke where steam was being raised for the capstan. Danny, the boy, appeared in the hoodway directly the gear had been "shot" with some mugs of tea—trawler tea—boiled up with molasses in a two-gallon kettle. It was nectar. The skipper wiped the snow away from his beard and swallowed the scalding stuff in gulps. He looked up to windward.

"Anyway," he said, "we oughter t'get sum't, Chris'mus or no Chris'mus wi' this blowin' up."

Twelve hours after we hauled. Five men perched on the gunnel of a little smack rolling up in the wind with the mainboom threshing noisily across, a tossing unit on the wild waste of water, toiling like mad to haul inboard a tangled half-frozen mass of streaming net. The deck-lamp shed a bright light over them, cutting a hole into the night and reflecting, in a monochrome of yellowy-brown, in the glistening oilskins, the wet deck and tan netting.

The big warp, like a brown snake, was paid into the forehold; then the steam-winch rattled out into the darkness, while a shower of sparks went hissing down in the wind. The apex of the net swung out of the sea, and went towering upwards to twist round

"Toiling like mad to haul inboard a tangled half-frozen mass of streaming net."

inboard with a whitey-grey mass showing, through the taut irregular meshes, the results of a tide's trawling. The skipper bit off a fresh bit of plug, and eyed it reflectively while the others piled the netting up on the gunnel out of the way. Then, as the winch roared out again, the mate dodged underneath the swinging pocket of fish to slack away the fastening to the end. There was a momentary pause, and a shower of rocks and weeds, of kicking, plunging fish, of rusted relics of forgotten craft, a hotchpot of everything that lies on the bottom of the ocean, dropped down amongst the slush of the trawler's deck.

The skipper turned it over critically with his foot and shook his head, while the others, without any loss of time, waded in and began sorting the catch. There was one turbot alone in its glory, some brill, and sundry pair of soles—they constituted the prime of the catch. Then there were plaice of all sizes, skate, ling, weavers, and scores of other beautiful but less known varieties of deep-sea fish, they were the inferior class, while the remainder went into a barrel forming the skipper's perquisite and known as "stocken."

"Our streak o' luck ain't come along yet," remarked Colley a trifle bitterly.

Back went the gear overside while Danny pitched back the rubbish on deck after gathering together some forty or so of the larger dabs for breakfast.

We made three more hauls with varying success till a dirty-black night ushered in Christmas Day. The little cabin clock had barely struck twelve when a veritable pandemonium on deck roused out all the hands in their bunks below. The mate who was in charge had rigged up the "gear down" bell in the cabin skylight, with Danny with the fog-buzzer on the other side, and the noise they made with shouting and drumming their heels on the deck would have wakened the Seven Sleepers.

"'Tis Chris'mus day," bawled the mate, "turn out b'low."

And we had no other choice. Still, time is never wasted on a trawler in dressing, for nobody doffs any clothing except sea-boots, so we swung our legs out into the cabin, lit our pipes after another sup of the inevitable tea, and pulled out our shirt-bags to examine the sundry parcels we had brought from home with strict injunctions not to open them till Christmas morning. They mostly took the shape of clothing, or else something to eat, but, perhaps, one of the most welcome was the big parcel from the mission containing a bundle of books and magazines with some thick woollen mittens all wrapped round in a brilliant calendar. The skipper straightened it out carefully and fixed it up round the samson post.

"That's goin' to bring the luck," he said, decisively.

With the grey dawn there came up the fragrant smell of frying sausages from Danny's galley, while the daring Ockey, clambering up to the cross-trees, swarmed up the mast to make fast a huge bunch of fir on the top of the spar, above the fluttering pennant. From that green at the masthead to the sprig of holly in the mate's cap everything aboard reflected the spirit of the day, and even the phlegmatic skipper put the boat two miles out of her course in order that we might cheer up, with the gear-down bell, a lumbering Baltic timber carrier that hove in sight, rolling wickedly, and flaunt a brilliant bunk blanket from our fir-wreathed forestay in greeting.

After a breakfast of sausages—with mashed potatoes—we hauled. It took longer than usual, Danny being excused from deck work, his attention being confined to the preparation of dinner. It was a busy morning, all hands cleaning down for the festivities and dinner. Then Danny set out the meal of the day in the cabin; there was no table, but we sat round with the plates and dishes mixed up with our legs on the floor. A big piece of beef, roasted ashore but warmed up at the boiler fire, duff made with eggs and swimming in gravy, baked potatoes, greens, carrots, and a mess of peas. What more was wanted with an appetite whetted to a razor edge by the chilly north-easter on deck! After that a

plum pudding, steaming hot, over which Colley wasted a precious half bottle of rum to set it alight, while the mate fittingly crowned it with the sprig of sea-stained holly out of his cap.

Then Colley made some special punch from a recipe he had picked up on a Dutch "cooper" in the bad old days.

It was a dream for the gods, that dinner, and we looked with a satiated eye upon the long array of dressings, oranges, nuts and sweets that lay in heaps along the lee-lockers.

"This is a good lead off, b'y," said old Colley, beaming across to me through a haze of tobacco smoke, "we'll make a run o' luck after this, sure."

. . . . . .

Some six hours after I was snugged down in my bunk with my knees pressed up against the bunk slide to keep me in as the smack rolled down. I was dozing off in a vague dream of other Christmas Days ashore, when the regular roll of the boat gave place to the heavy pitching of being "hove-to." I heard the confused roar of the winch, the rattle of boot heels on deck and the grunting of men hauling in unison. Then there was a blank for a few minutes followed by the rattle of rocks and other *débris* on the deck above and the light in the skylight was darkened for a moment. I looked up and saw old Colley's red face, astream with brine running off his sou'wester, beaming down upon me.

"We've hit it, the josliest little pod o' fish out," he bawled. "Look!"

And a tremendous turbot came flopping through the open cabin top, followed by another and then another, till six at last lay kicking and gasping on the clean cabin floor.

"We've hit it, b'y, that streak o' luck. Two more tides up an' down across that pit an' I'm lumpin' a fifty pound catch on the mark't. Chris'mus fish'n, b'y."

AN OLD SONG.

OH, melody of by-gone days!
Oh, words allied to sounds so sweet!
Oh, memories of joy and pain,
Where tears and laughter meet!

Once more I walk by sunny ways,
Once more I hear the river flow—
I hear the echo of a voice,
A voice of long ago!

No more—no more, oh, Memory—
Oh, blinding tears from eyes long dry—
Oh, heart bereft, the song remains,
But Love has passed you by!

MAUD A. BLACK.

"ASKING PAPA."

THE DIARY OF AN ORDEAL.

BY C. V. HOWARD VINCENT.

SEPT. 6TH.—All that I have to do now is to see Old Harbin and get his formal consent to the union. Before I proposed to Elsie, I thought asking her was about the most awkward task I could set myself, but now I can see that popping the question is but child's work to asking papa. You see Elsie was friendly disposed towards me, while Mr. Harbin, I know for a fact, dislikes all engineers intensely; and my being in the electrical line won't favour my chances for getting into his good graces. Besides, Elsie is his favourite daughter (I don't wonder at that at all—she's ten times prettier than Gracie or Marian), and he'll simply turn pink at the idea of anyone taking her away from him. You know it's awfully rotten this business of parental blessing. I felt as happy as a lark when I left Elsie, *my* Elsie, to-night; but the nearer I got to my home the more I thought of Mr. Harbin and the less my thoughts dwelt on my dear Elsie, with the result that by the time I reached the house I was thoroughly depressed.

SEPT. 9TH.—I have been sounding several acquaintances as to the ritual generally observed in this business, and have received rather conflicting advice. Jerry Boyd thinks the best time to tackle the old boy is shortly after his lunch, when City aldermen are supposed to be in their most genial and complacent mood; but circumstances do not permit my calling upon Mr. Harbin in the middle of the day, so that tip was no good. Harry Barclay advised me to get Elsie to arrange an interview between her father and me some evening, but I fear that won't do, because she has told me already she absolutely daren't break the news to him in that fashion. You see Old Harbin has not seen much of me, for Mrs. Harbin has generally invited me to the house when he has been out. I suppose he's a bit of a tartar in his own home, because everybody is so jolly when he's not hanging about. The third chap I asked about this affair says it's customary, when asking a gentleman for his fair daughter's hand, to take with you a detailed account of your financial position, a life insurance policy, and something approaching certificates of health and character. The subject is really getting on my nerves, and if Elsie wasn't the most ripping girl in England I do believe I should abandon the idea.

SEPT. 12TH.—How news does travel to be sure. I had a letter to-day from the Norfolk Life Office quoting their rates for life insurance, and pointing out the advantages of a life policy to a young man of a marriageable age; and, before lunch, an agent for a Liverpool company called and tried to persuade me to take out a policy. . . . I saw Elsie this afternoon; she never referred to her father, so I avoided the subject and tried to enjoy myself by putting the ordeal right out of my mind for the time being. But it's no use procrastinating, for I was thinking about Old Harbin all the way home.

SEPT. 14TH.—I have decided to take out a policy for £500 with this Liverpool office, and am to go to Dr. Bristey's on Thursday night to be examined. I do hope he will find me quite sound,

but I must admit I have not been up to the mark these last few days, having experienced what I should suppose is called "palpitation."

SEPT. 16TH.—I felt so queer to-day that I thought it best not to go to be medically examined for a short while; it would not be policy to see Bristey unless I felt tip-top. My appetite has been very poor, too, of late, and Aunt Madge says I have a careworn look.

SEPT. 21ST.—I saw Elsie off to Inverness to-day; I *shall* miss her for the long weeks she is in Scotland. Her dad went yesterday, so I must shelve our proposed interview until his return. I told Elsie (what a stunner she is to be sure; I felt quite cut up to see the last of the darling for so long). Yes, I told Elsie I thought it would be a good idea for me to write to him about it, but she said that would never do; she thinks I had best wait for a favourable opportunity when he is at home again.

SEPT. 24TH.—I was feeling very much in the blues to-night, so when Dick came and asked me to go to a music-hall, I willingly assented, for I thought it would cheer me up. The Empire was "house full," so we went over to the Grand to a drama. But it was all about a stern parent who came between two lovers and made them most unhappy. I got so thoroughly miserable in the third act that I came out and refused to return to see if all was put right before the final curtain.

SEPT. 26TH.—Had a nice long letter from Elsie. She tells me that a doctor chap is paying her a lot of embarrassing attention, and the worst of it is, our engagement being a secret, she can't tell him about my having first claim on her affections, and so ward him off. I feel rather sick about this, because we really are affianced.

SEPT. 28TH.—I was feeling a bit fitter to-day, so I boldly submitted my constitution to Dr. Bristey's critical examination. He took a long time with me, asked who my usual medical attendant was, and said he supposed the insurance company would write me in the ordinary course. I would like to know what his verdict is.

SEPT. 29TH.—Another long letter from Elsie to-day. Really this doctor wants a good hammering, he seems to have thoroughly charmed Mrs. Harbin, because Elsie tells me she simply thrusts the two of them together. Elsie writes that she's as true as steel, but I'm really beginning to get very, very uneasy about it all.

OCT. 2ND.—I have been too depressed to write anything lately, and really nothing had happened until I heard from Elsie this morning that this Doctor Maxwell (confound him) has actually had the audacity to go to Mr. Harbin and formally ask for permission to pay his attentions to Miss Elsie,! What an outrageous thing to do!' But I am extremely pleased to record that the old boy quickly sent the bounder about his business, telling him that his proposal would not be entertained for one moment. Quite right, too; the idea of any young man daring to woo Elsie! The thing's simply unthinkable. I *am* glad Old Harbin came out hot and strong.

OCT. 6TH.—The insurance company have accepted my proposal, and I shall have the pleasure of paying some £20 odd to their agent to-morrow. £500 added to what Aunt Madge leaves me will make quite a modest competence for a young widow.

. . . . .

DEC. 21ST.—Elsie writes me that they are coming home for Christmas! She adds that the gallant medico went away broken-hearted—serve him right!

DEC. 22ND.—I have seen Elsie again, and it has quite cheered me up to be in her delightful company. I *have* missed her while she has been away, and I really believe I would go crazy were I to lose her altogether. She has asked me to go to her house to tea on Christmas Day! Do I dream? Are visions about?

DEC. 23RD.—I have been writing up my position, and find I am worth £400 in hard cash, and my income from all sources is £275 per annum. I am an orphan, with expectations from my aunt, and, according to Dr. Errison, possess a sound and unimpaired con-

stitution ; and oh, yes, I was forgetting this, I love Elsie Harbin with all my heart and soul, and will marry her (if her dad will let me).

DEC. 25TH.—I went to Elsie's to tea to-day. Things went on very pleasantly ; her sisters had some girl friends in, and I was the only representative of my sex present at the tea-table, though Old Harbin was at home, but he had his tea in the study. About 6 o'clock I suggested to Elsie that we should take a short stroll, when she told me quite nicely and reverently that "Daddy would like to have a few words with me, and was upstairs in his study at the moment." She pressed my hand and vanished. With many terrors upon me I slowly walked up the stairs, each step finding me more nervous than the one before. I tried to collect my thoughts, but found that my income was running into a fabulous sum, being, I believe, about the amount of the insurance policy, my savings, and Aunt Madge's money all rolled into one. However, I remembered that I was born in Herefordshire, and with this comforting thought in my breast I boldly walked to the study door. For one dreadful moment I thought of dashing headlong out of the house, but I heard Elsie's voice downstairs, and remembering what a prize I was competing for, I knocked at the door ; a kindly voice bade me " Come in." I entered accordingly, and started to walk across the room ; I'm certain the people downstairs must have heard my heart beating, and my knees were positively knocking together. I tried to start a sentence, but failed, and I really seemed to be glued to where I stood. Mr. Harbin looked at me with a genial smile, and seeing I was apparently speechless for the moment, he very kindly rose from his chair, walked over to me, shook my hand warmly, and said : " Take her, my boy—a Christmas Box—stop and dine and—and—you'll find some mistletoe about downstairs, I think ! "

"WHEN GOES MY LADY SHOPPING."

WHEN goes My Lady shopping
In hood and tippet white,
The wintry sun comes peeping
To view her with delight,
A dozen gallants hasten
As down the Mall she trips,
To win a word of greeting,
A smile from Beauty's lips.

When in the quaint old toyshop
My Lady stops to gaze
At jewel-set pomander,
And pearls like cloudy rays,
At fan where peacocks shimmer,
Brocade in sparkling fold . . .
There's nought of all such splendour
Outvies her hair of gold.

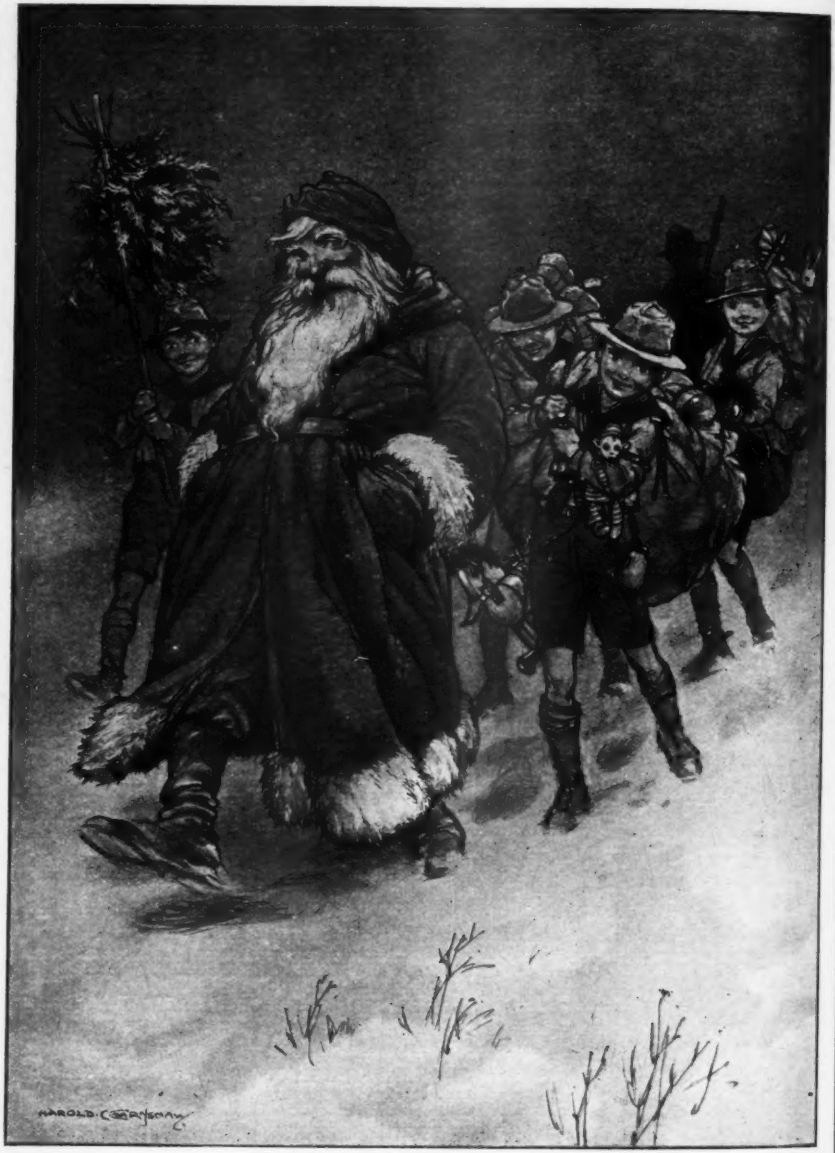
When comes My Lady homeward
Adown the wintry dusk,
The frosty air seems fragrant
With lavender and musk,
The leafless trees sigh softly
As sunshine leaves the sky,
When in her hood of swansdown
My Lady flutters by.

A. BRYERS.

The Children's Pages

IN the pages that follow are given a number of stories, verses, and pictures especially devised for the entertainment of children, big and little.

But even to grown-ups, they may, it is hoped, be commended; whilst some may think that the little stories told by General Baden-Powell apropos of Santa Claus and Christmas Stockings have a lasting value, though even that famous Spartan would not have us go without our plum puddings.



A little help is worth a lot of sympathy.'

SANTA CLAUS AND THE BOY SCOUTS.

BY LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR ROBERT BADEN-POWELL.

ILLUSTRATED BY HAROLD C. EARNSHAW.

You know who Santa Claus is, don't you? I expect you know him as an old man who comes in the night when everybody is asleep, and brings presents and happiness for you. No one has ever seen him; but you know that, really, nobody could see him if they wanted to, because he is not an old man at all. If you hung up your stockings when you went to bed at Christmas, and if then you sat up all night, you would see somebody come and quietly fill the stocking with presents, but that somebody would not be a strange old man, it would be somebody that you know quite well—your mother or father or some kind friend, acting for Santa Claus. There are lots of people who do Santa Claus's work for him, and they generally do it secretly, without saying a word to anybody, and I should like to tell you something about them.

THE MAN WITH THE SICK CHILD.

BOY Scouts are some of those people. They go about every day quietly doing kind things without letting people know that they have done them.

One morning, lately, a poor working man found his wife and two of his children very ill—so ill that they had to be taken off to the hospital. And the poor man was left with one little child and his home to look after. But he had to go to work at the factory, otherwise he would get no money to buy his food with. So he asked the wife of a neighbour to look in every now and then and see that his child was all right. In the afternoon, so soon as he could finish his work, he hurried home and got there before his usual time. To his astonishment he found the house all neat and clean, and the supper things laid out ready for him; and in the kitchen was a strange boy cooking his food, while another boy was playing with his child, which had been nicely washed and dressed.

When he asked the boys who they were, he found that they were Boy Scouts. They had meant to get everything ready for him, and then quietly to have slipped away before he got home, so that he would have found everything as nice as if his wife had been there, but would not have known who the Santa Claus was who had done him the kindness.

After that the two Scouts came every day and did the same thing for about a week, till the mother of the family came out of hospital and returned home.

THE BOY WHO FELL INTO THE CANAL.

A short time ago a poor woman heard that her son had fallen into the canal and was drowning. She rushed off down the streets without stopping to put on hat or shawl. When she got to the canal bank, she ran frantically about asking for her boy. Then someone told her that he had been got out of the water and had been taken home through some other streets. So she tore back to her house, and there she

found her lad safely in bed, wrapped up in blankets, with all his wet clothes hanging before the fire. And the neighbours told her that a Boy Scout who was wet from head to foot had carried him in and had put him to bed; he had then gone off again without saying a word as to who he was—although he had jumped into the canal and saved her son.

That Scout was a young Santa Claus you see.

The Old Gentleman and His Watch.

Not long ago, an old gentleman told me how, when he was in a back street in London, a man suddenly knocked him down and jerked his gold watch out of his pocket and ran off with it. At that moment a Boy Scout happened to come round the corner, and although he was only a small boy, he instantly dashed off after the thief, shouting "Stop thief!" as hard as he could. The man, finding himself closely pressed, at last threw down the watch and bolted into safety. The boy picked up the watch and got quickly back to the old gentleman. Finding him very upset by the attack, the boy called a cab and put him into it, with his watch safe again in his pocket, and sent him off home. But he never gave his name or said who he was, because the Scouts do their good deeds quietly—just like Santa Claus.

"No Reward, Thank You."

Only the other day a lady told me that she was pushing her bicycle up a hill when a Boy Scout came up and asked if he might wheel the machine for her. She told him she could do it all right herself; but he begged her to allow him, and so she handed it over to him. When they got to the top of the hill she offered him threepence as a reward, but he touched his hat and said: "No, thank you, ma'm. It is my duty. We don't take any rewards."

She was so pleased with this that she asked where he came from, and what was his name.

Again he saluted, and said: "Please ma'm, I am a Boy Scout," and went off smiling, without telling her anything more about himself.

One Good Deed a Day.

Well, you will say that that was not a very difficult thing to do—to wheel a lady's bicycle up a hill. Neither is it, but good turns need not be big ones. If you only make room for someone on a crowded seat, if you only take a piece of orange peel off the pavement so that no one shall slip on it, these are good turns; they are very small ones, but still they are good.

Boy Scouts do at least one good deed every day, and they say nothing about it—they are helping Santa Claus.

So you see you need not wait till you are grown up to do Santa Claus's work. You can easily be like a Boy Scout, and do it while you are young.

"Be a Young Santa Claus."

It is very nice to get a present given you by Santa Claus, but it is ever so much nicer to help Santa Claus to give a present or to do a good turn to somebody else. You try it and see.

And then if you do it quite secretly so that nobody can guess who has been kind to them it is great fun. They will always think it is some grown-up who has done it, when all the time it was YOU.

So go ahead and be a young Santa Claus.

THE SANTA CLAUS FAMILY.

BY OWEN OLIVER.

ILLUSTRATED BY A. E. JACKSON.

I.—THE STORY OF MR. SANTA CLAUS.

YOU don't believe in Santa Claus? I didn't when I was as little as you, but I did when I was seven, and I do now I'm twenty and seven. "Why?" Because I've seen her. What are you laughing at? "Santa Claus isn't a her? He's a man?" Ah! That's what *you* think. *I* know better.

You want to hear about her, do you? Well, ask mummy if Uncle Tom may tell you just one story before you go to bed. "Mummy's coming to listen, too." Umph! This story wasn't meant for mummy; but she was always an inquisitive person! When I was a nice fat little baby she stuck a pin in me to see if I'd squeak. You can ask granny, if you don't believe me. Mummy may laugh now; but she didn't then—not after granny came in!

The story happened at Christmas time, when I was a very naughty little boy of seven, almost as naughty as Bob, though that doesn't seem possible! My father was abroad, and your mummy had scarlet fever, and granny was nursing her; and they sent me to stay with an old lady named Munson, who had been granny's nurse. She had grown very old, and the servant who waited on her was very old, too. So she hadn't much time to look after a very tiresome little boy. She even forgot to buy the Christmas present that granny sent the money for; but we won't talk about that, because it will upset granny if we do.

You can guess I was pretty dull. It rained for about a week, and even when it was fine they wouldn't let me go out for fear I should catch a cold. So I spent most of my time rubbing my nose against the window and watching the street; and especially I watched for the beautiful young lady next door. I thought she was like a princess in a story, and I think so still; and you can tell your mummy not to look so inquisitive, because I don't know the beautiful lady's name, and I jolly well wish I did. No, Bob, "jolly well" is *not* a bad swear. Neither is "jolly miserable"; and that's how I felt

On Christmas Day I felt worse, for I'd hung up my stocking the night before, and when I went to look in the morning there was nothing in it. I'm not going to say if I cried, because boys have no business to cry; but if ever a little boy felt jolly well down on his luck, I did. I stared out of the window and saw all the people who passed looked happy and smiling, and that made me feel more miserable. When the beautiful lady came home from church she laughed at me and waved her hand and called, "A Merry Christmas, dear!" And then—well, if I did cry any time it was then. Why, Eva, you little goose! There's nothing to cry about now. Suppose you give Uncle Tom a kiss to make up for it? There!

I didn't eat much dinner, and the old servant was cross about that, and I flew into a temper and said I wished I was dead, and she got cross about that, and she went out and banged the door, and then—mind, I don't say I *did* cry, but *if* I did that was the time. I was sitting in the armchair in front of the fire, and I think I was saying to myself that I wanted "mummy"—my mummy, you know, not yours. Yes, I mean granny—and there was a knock at the door, and Santa Claus walked in!

He had a long red cloak trimmed with white fur—rather like the opera cloaks that ladies wore then—and a wreath of holly on his head. I said he was a lady, did I? Oh, I say all sorts of funny things! He had a long white beard, and he carried a staff and a lot of packages, and he spoke in a deep voice, like your mummy does when she's playing "bears" with you.

"Tommy," he said, "I'm Santa Claus!" And he gave me all the parcels—five of them!

There was a clockwork engine, and a box of bricks, and a box of tops, and two men who wrestled when you pulled a string—Santa Claus knelt down on the floor and showed me how to do it—and some reins to play horses. I danced and laughed till I saw the reins, and then I—I didn't laugh.

"Oh, Santa Claus!" I said. "Sissy is ill in bed; and its scarlet fever; and perhaps I shan't never have her to play horses with any more!"

Santa Claus picked me up and sat in the armchair and hugged me, and his beard came off, and he was the beautiful, beautiful lady from next door!

"Sissy will get well," she told me; "and you shall come in and play with me this afternoon. I *love* playing horses!"

I said, "And I love you!" I remember it very particularly because I'd never said that to a lady before, and I've never said it to one since. And directly after I said, "I love you better than if you were Mr. Santa Claus," and she said, "I'm Miss Santa Claus, Tommy," and then she kissed me, and I kissed her. "Ever done that since?" I believe mummy whispered to you to ask that! You can tell mummy that she's a great deal too curious.

The beautiful lady took me into her house and played horses and wild Indians, and building houses with cards, and seeing who could blow the other's house down first; and when I was tired of playing she took me on her lap and told me stories, and when it was quite late she took me home—to Mrs. Munson's, I mean; and when she was going I kissed her, and I said, "I think you are lovely, and when I am a man I will marry you."

She kissed me again and said, "I am afraid I shall be too dreadfully old, darling; but I tell you what you can do. You can marry someone else who is like me."

I said, "Yes, Miss Santa Claus; and I won't ever marry anyone unless she is like you *exactly!*" Do you know I have said that every Christmas ever since. Mummy may shrug herself as much as she pleases, but I never will. So it's no use her telling me that I'm "getting on" and ought to settle down.

"Afterwards?" There wasn't any proper afterwards. Aunt Annie came for me the next morning, and took me to her house, and was very, very kind to me. I ran in next door to say good-bye to Miss Santa Claus, but she was out. I have never seen her again, and I have

"The beautiful lady took me into her house and played horses and wild Indians."

never seen the lady who is like her "exactly." I don't think there can be such a lady. Miss Santa Claus was so very lovely.

"Try to find her?" Of course I have! There's a man making inquiries now. If you don't see me at the Christmas dinner to-morrow you'll know I've heard of Miss Santa Claus and gone off to see her. If real things happened properly, like they do in stories, she ought to have a little boy who wants a Santa Claus, and I ought to be Mr. Santa Claus to him, don't you think?

Now it's half-past bedtime! I'll carry Eva and Bob, and mummy can take Boy. Up you go. What, Bella? Yes, my dear. Gospel true, every word of it. Yes. It *is* ridiculous, but, do you know, Bella, if I met a girl like she was, I'd marry her to-morrow! Good-night, kiddies. Eh? Mr. Santa Claus? Well, I warn you, if you call me that, I shall act up to the name. *Good*-night!

II.—THE STORY OF MRS. SANTA CLAUS.

Yes, dears. It *is* a funny Christmas with daddy away. Poor old daddy! So far from us all, and working so hard to try to make money for us! Do you know, I expect he is more worried at being unable to send us money to buy "Santa Clauses" with than we are at going without them. I'm very glad that we wrote him all those nice letters, aren't you? I expect he has the mail now. Well, well! I think we have been pretty brave, don't you? "You think I am pretty *and* brave!" Oh, Dick, dear! I shall write that down on a piece of paper, and put the date and "That is what my big son said of his mother!" Stop, stop, stop, children! You'll make your old mother vainer than ever! No, no, no! Mercy! I won't say "old." Your *young* mother. Of course I'm young with you all around me. Still it's a different sort of young, you know. There was a time when I looked *exactly* like Sis looks now; when I was eighteen; and there's somebody looking for Sis for that very reason, if he hasn't forgotten. He vowed that he would marry somebody who was exactly like me when he grew up. He was such a nice little fellow. He said that your young mother was lovely!

"Tell you about him?" Very well.

It happened at Christmas-time, when I was Sis's age—nearly nineteen. He was a little boy who came to live with an old person next door, because his sister had scarlet fever. He was a pretty little fellow, with curly hair, and he was about seven years old. The old lady next door had been a nurse, and some of the ladies she had nursed gave her a sort of pension, and I believe her sons helped her. So she was not very poor. I think she had been a nice woman, and fond of children, but she had grown too old to do much for the little boy, and her servant was an old cross-patch. So I am afraid the little boy was very dull and lonely. He used to look out of the window all day, and I used to smile at him. I should have liked to ask if I could have him in to tea, and play with him, but I thought the old cross-patch servant would tell me to mind my own business; and they never let him out, so I couldn't talk to him.

On Christmas Day, when I came home from church, he was at the window as usual. I called out to him to wish him a merry Christmas, and instead of answering he ran away from the window, and I thought that he was crying. I said so to my mother, and the housemaid heard.

"And no wonder, miss," she said. "I was speaking to the woman next door, and she mentioned she'd forgotten to get the Santa Claus that his mother sent the money for. It'll be just as good to-morrow, she says. It's plain she doesn't know much about children and the store they set on hanging up their little stockings!"

"Oh," I said, "the *poor* little boy!" I very nearly cried myself. "I will run round to Mr. Harmer's"—that was a toyshop—"and buy him some presents and take them in. I don't care how rude the woman is. I shan't come away till I've given them to him."

I went to the shop—at least, I went to the house. The shop was shut, because it was Christmas Day; but when I explained to Mr. Harmer, he got the toys for me, and as soon as dinner was over I took them in. Father teased me about it, but he was pleased with me really, you know, and my hair, and stuck some holly in, as if I was a Christmas pudding. I rubbed my cheeks hard to make them red—your young mother had more colour then—and I took a big stick of my father's for a staff. The cross-patch servant jumped when she saw me.

"I'm Miss Lane, from next door," I

"He found out all about us, and bought Christmas presents for us, and dressed up as Mr. Santa Claus, and came."

afterwards he gave me most of the money that I had spent, and called me "Miss Santa Claus"; and that put a bright idea into my head. I *do* have ideas sometimes!

"Why," I cried, "of course, I'll dress up as Santa Claus!"

And I did. I wore my red opera cloak, and made a wreath of ivy for

told her, "and I've come to give these toys to the little boy; and I want to have him to tea and play with him. I am sure he is lonely."

She told me a rigmarole about what a lot she did for him, and grumbled a good deal, but she let me go upstairs to him. He was very pleased with the toys; and my beard fell off—I forgot

to tell you about the beard. My mother made it out of a piece of an old sheepskin mat. And I told him I was Miss Santa Claus, and took him home to tea and supper, and we had fine games, and when I had carried him back, and was saying good-bye, he said that when he grew up he would marry me!

I laughed inside myself, because, you see, I was going out to the Cape the next month to marry father. Of course I didn't laugh at him. I told him that I was too old, but he could marry someone else instead. Then he said that he would never marry anyone unless she was *exactly* like me. . . . Do you know, he said it as if he meant it with all his dear little heart! He was *such* a darling little chap!

An aunt took him away the next day, and they gave me a wrong address, and my letter came back; and next month I went off to marry daddy, and I have never seen the little boy since. I expect he's forgotten Miss Santa Claus. It's twenty years ago, and he was very young. If he hasn't, I'm afraid he won't be able to marry anyone, unless he finds Miss Sissy Santa Claus. . . . If life went like stories that is just what would happen. I don't believe any girl was ever so like her mother as you are, Sis—like I *was*, I mean. . . . You dear silly! I'm just an old Mrs. Santa Claus now. . . .

Whoever is that knocking? . . . Why——? . . . Whatever are the children making such an uproar about? . . . *Mr. Santa Claus!* . . . Toys for you? . . . I—really. . . . *Are you little Tommy?* . . . My dear boy! . . . You're rather big to call that, but, you see, you *were* little. . . . The kindness wasn't much, Tommy. I mean, Mr. ——? . . . Then you shall remain "Tommy." . . . This is my eldest daughter, the Miss Santa Claus of to-day. Don't you think she is very like me, as I was. . . . As I am? I don't believe it, but I like to be told so. . . . Yes, I am much the same at heart, I hope; and you—you have treasured up my little kindness all these twenty years, and you have taken all this trouble and come to be my children's Mr. Santa Claus. . . . Bless you, Mr.—Tommy! . . . No, no! I'm just an old *Mrs.* Santa Claus.

III.—The Story of Miss Santa Claus.

Dearest Minnie,—You will be surprised to hear that I am engaged. I think my engagement is just the prettiest story that ever was, so I am going to tell you about it.

He came to our house a fortnight ago, on Christmas Day, dressed up as Santa Claus. He was a little boy who was staying next door to my dear lovely mummy twenty years ago, and he was lonely and uncared for, and mummy dressed up as "Miss Santa Claus"—she had just been telling us about it when he came—and took him presents, and had him to tea and played with him. You can see that she was just the same sweet darling then as she is now. And he said he would marry her when he grew up, but she said she would be too old, and then he declared he would never marry anyone unless she was *exactly* like mummy. He says I am, and so does everybody.

He proposed two days ago, but he says that he made up his mind to do it the moment he saw me in the passage under the lamp. I didn't make up my mind till long after—nearly half an hour—when he had washed the red off his face, and taken off his Santa Claus beard and cloak.

You see, I knew he must be very nice. He had employed a detective to trace mother, and when he found that father had had losses—but he is doing splendidly in Australia, he writes, and we received quite a big cheque on Boxing Day—he found out all about us, and bought Christmas presents for us, and dressed up as "Mr. Santa Claus," and came. I am so glad. I love him very much, Minnie, darling!

Mother says we shall be a regular Santa Claus family—Mr. Santa Claus and Miss Santa Claus, and Mrs. Santa Claus and all the little Santa Clauses; and when I said, "You've left out darling daddy," she laughed at me.

"Daddy," she said, "is all the Santa Clauses rolled into one; and—and—" do you know, mother blushed like a girl, and *looked* like one—"I've my own pet name for daddy, and I shan't tell you, and I won't call him anything else, not even in fun!"

I think daddy and mummy are *more* than Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus. They love doing things for everybody all the year round. My Mr. Santa Claus is like that, too, and I am going to try to be like them all.

Your loving friend,

SISSY SANTA CLAUS.

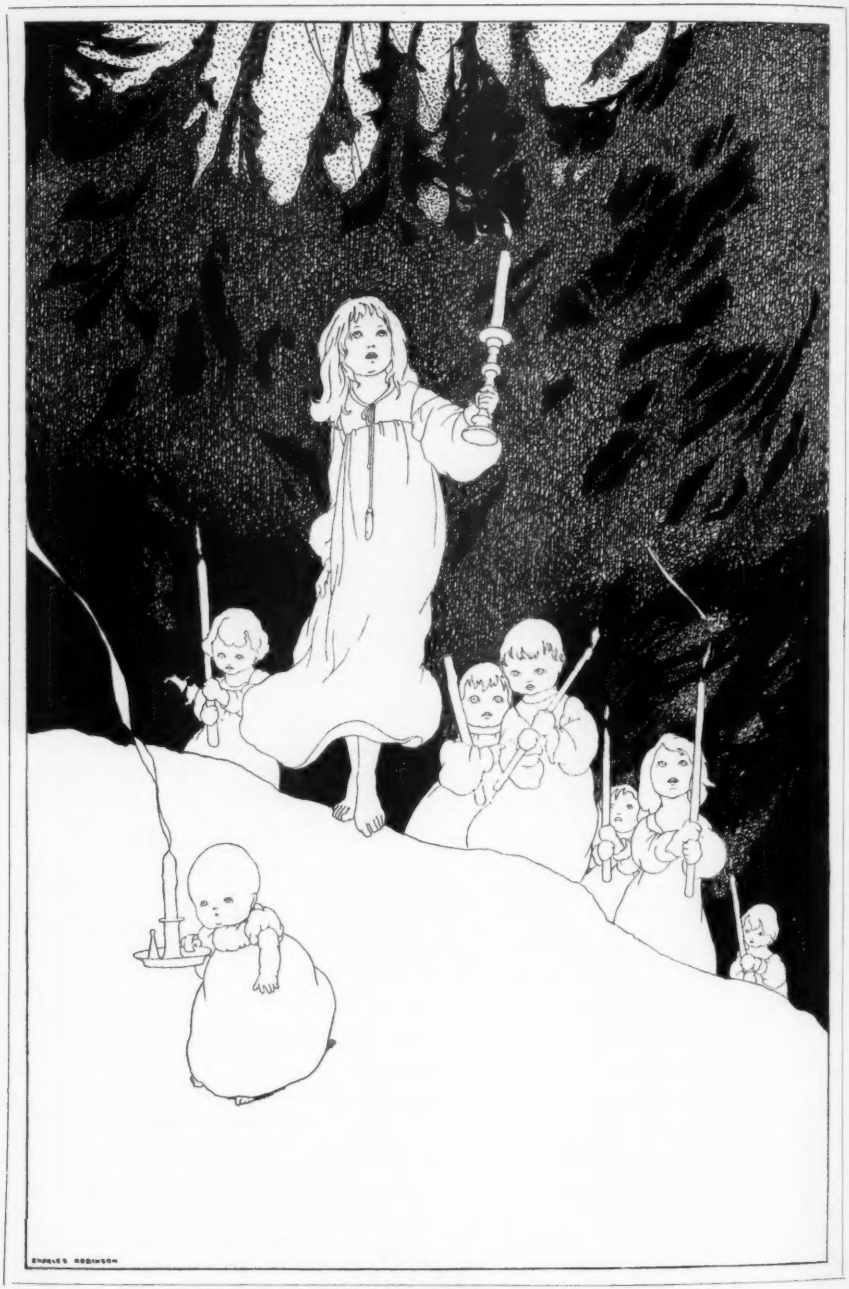
HIS KINGDOM

HE'S got a little kingdom,
And he wears a little crown.
No matter if it's paper,
They just tremble at his frown.
He rules them like a tyrant
But not one of them can curse,
For he abdicates at night-time
When he's put to bed by nurse!

His minstrel's a canary,
And his sentinel's a dog,
And his only kind of jester
Is a Christmas gollywog.
His nursery's the palace,
With a gate above the stairs,
And the tricks he plays the housemaid
Are his only State affairs!

He's a monarch many envy,
And his mother's eyes grow dim
When she thinks of all the kingdoms
Where they're wanting one like him.
For she knows no other ruler
With a sway as sweet as this—
That he gives his royal orders
With a baby's clinging kiss!

D. EARDLEY-WILMOT.



"Children out-of-bed we are,
Who have journeyed very far
Just to see the Wonder Star

The Wonder-Star

A Singing Game for Children

By ELEANOR FARJEON. Illustrated by CHARLES ROBINSON.

PINE-TREES in a ring on a snowy mountain-top lift their heads to a clear, dark, starless sky. The soft sparkle of snow that lies spread about their feet is crisp and unbroken.

A little troop of white Gnomes in pointed caps creeps up the mountain, winding in and out among the tall black stems; they seem full of mystery and suppressed joy. Each swings in his right hand a rosy winter cherry lit like a lamp, and each has the left forefinger pressed to his lips.

They come out on the mountain-top and sing softly:

Here we are, O here we are!
We have journeyed very far
Just to see the Wonder-Star——
Dance! to-morrow's Christmas!

The road is long, the mountain's high,
The mountain-top is near the sky,
The Star will be there by-and-by,
Dance! for joy of Christmas.

They dance lightly and joyously in the snow.

A little band of Children steals up through the pines, barefoot and night-gowned, each carrying a lighted candle. The Gnomes sing to them:

Who are you, O who are you
Coming softly two and two
From the distance dark and blue
To the edge of Christmas?

The Children sing:

Children out-of-bed we are,
Who have journeyed very far
Just to see the Wonder-Star
That will shine on Christmas.

The Gnomes sing:

Did you never take affright
Coming late along the night?

The Children sing:

No, our Mothers said we might,
And to-morrow's Christmas.

The Gnomes sing:

Nothing then your journey stayed
Startling to a little maid?

The Children sing:

We were not at all afraid——
Dance! to-morrow's Christmas.

The Gnomes and the Children dance together in the snow.

A company of little Shepherds in white sheepskins comes through the trees, the same joy and mystery in them as in the others. They carry crooks and lighted torches. The Gnomes and Children sing:

Who are you, O who are you?
What have you come here to do
Underneath the midnight blue
On the Eve of Christmas?

The Shepherds sing :

Little Shepherd-boys we are,
Who have journeyed very far
Just to see the Wonder-Star
That belongs to Christmas

The Others sing :

Is it true the Star will be
Visible to you and me ?

The Shepherds sing :

Shepherd, Child, and Elf shall see
Plain the Star of Christmas.

The Others sing :

Can you also say why thus
It will shine miraculous ?

The Shepherds sing :

As a gift for all of us.
Dance ! to-morrow's Christmas.

The Gnomes, Children, and Shepherds dance together.

Three little Kings in white cloaks and golden crowns, and bearing golden lanterns, tread up the mountain. The others sing to them :

Who are you, O who are you,
Grandest men we ever knew ?
Will you dance among us too ?
For to-morrow's Christmas.

The Kings sing :

Little Kings is all we are,
Who have journeyed very far
Just to see the Wonder-Star
That is born with Christmas.

The Others sing :

Tell us, tell us how you know
That the Star this way will go ?

The Kings sing :

O an Angel told us so,
And to-morrow's Christmas.

The Others sing :

Did the Angel say as well
What the Star-birth will foretell ?

The Kings sing :

Hush ! it is a Miracle !
Let us dance for Christmas.

The Kings, the Shepherds, the Children, and the Gnomes dance together. But a change seems to come over the world. One by one they stop dancing, and stand grouped in attitudes of expectation, watching the sky. There is silence.

All at once the mountain-top lies bathed in silver light.

A tiny Angel runs in joyfully clapping its hands. It comes among the watchers and says :

" Your little Brother is born ! "

The Kings, the Shepherds, the Children, and the Gnomes spring up clapping their hands also, and laughing delightedly.

They take hands with the Angel and dance radiantly, singing :

Here we are, O here we are !
We have journeyed very far,
We have seen the Wonder-Star
That is born at Christmas !

We have found a Brother new,
He belongs to me and you,
So we all are brothers too——
Dance ! for joy of Christmas !

As they dance the air begins to sparkle with snow. Faster and faster it falls, until nothing can be seen through its mist but the twinkling lights of the dancers vanishing away down the mountain.

When the snow clears, only the tiny Angel remains, pillowed asleep on a white bank, with the Star shining full upon it.

A FAIRY TALE FROM THE EAST.

o o o

BY HARRY TIGHE.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK C. PAPÉ.

SHE was a tiny moon-child; and at nights, while her mother displayed her soft, dreamy beauty to the world, she danced up and down the silver moonbeams. Sometimes she lingered in a mango grove and listened to words of passionate love from the lips of Hindu men and maidens. At another time she rested on the river and heard the intimate whisperings of other dusky paramours sailing, with closed eyes, bare arms, beating hearts and voices hushed to tender words, towards the golden light of the limitless immensity of the ocean of immemorial love, whose mystic odes are murmured with the dreamy cadence of ages past and ages yet to come.

"Love must be inexpressibly beautiful," the moon-child thought as she sped straight into the arms of her amorous mother, and cried piteously to be allowed to live as a mortal.

"Why?" asked the moon-mother who rules the reckless world of night.

"Because lovers are so beautiful!" the infatuated child replied with the rapturous fervour of the immature ignorance of youth.

"You have listened to the wild words the unwise speak on the Indian plains and in the jungles. I know their falseness, for it is my beauty that intoxicates their speech. Know you not that my enemy the hateful Buddha said, 'Life is like a whirlpool wherein we are dashed to and fro by our passions'? And if you become mortal you will learn the horrible truth of the Buddha's words."

The moon-child did not heed the warning. She spoke like one in a dream:

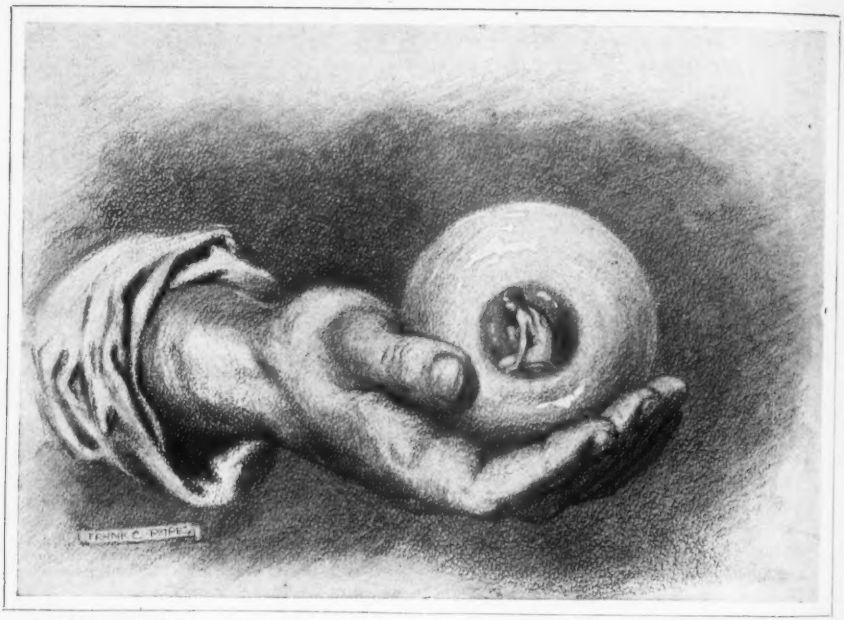
"Yester night I played in a Persian rose garden, and there I peeped into a room where a great poet sat writing. I looked over his shoulder and read:

Drink deep of earthly love, that so thy lips
May learn the sense of holier love to sip."

There was no sound in the clear, vaulted, intense violet sky, lit with the lanterns of innumerable stars. The moon-mother, who at other times was wont to revel in her power to make men drunken with the wine of passion, breathed wearily as she listened to her child.

"On the plains of India, by the rivers, in the jungle the lovers meet. To them love is life. They tell each other love is worth the loss of eternity, and of it they drink deep till all else becomes a dream. They live to love. Let *me* love."

The amorous moon-mother, who nightly woos the hills, the valleys, the rivers and the seas, hesitated before she gave her child permission to live on the earth for the space of three years.



"The pearl rolled . . . into the rough palm of his work-soiled hand. It took human shape."

With a tiny laugh of great joy, as of silver marriage bells, the moon-child sped down a moonbeam. She had to remain where it ended; and after passing quickly through tall banana trees, palms and dark-leaved mangoes, full of half-ripe fruit, she rested on an exquisite petal of a Moghra flower:

The Moghra flowers, the Moghra flowers,
So dear to youth at play,
The small and subtle Moghra flowers
That only last a day.

She waited impatiently. For she could not assume the shape of a human child till touched by some human hand. Towards the opalescent dawn, in the hushed movement of the birth of day, amid the purple mists of the sensual Indian jungle, a woodman returned from a journey. The tiny pearl that rested on the subtle Moghra flower caught his eye. He thought, as he would pass the temple on his homeward way, he would place the blossom as a morning offering to the Buddha. He carefully plucked the small white flower, and as he did so the pearl rolled off the ivory petal into the rough palm of his work-soiled hand. It took human shape—it grew and grew while he watched it, with awe and a deep fear in his copper-coloured bosom. The moon-child became so large that she fell out of the woodman's hand and, standing by his side, became a little swarthy Indian maid, with eyes so large and round and bewilderingly beautiful that the woodman instantly loved her with the fierce passion of the burning sun on the deserts. He took her in his arms and, kissing her softly-tinted cheeks and her scented hair, he called her his "Star," and swore he would take her to wife.

The moon-child was sad, for she felt no pulsating response to his passionate embrace, such as had accentuated the breathing of the dusky maidens in the jungle and on the river. She walked by the woodman's side among the glories of the forest. The palms whispered their secrets overhead, and the dew on the gorgeous hibiscus blooms dropped pearls over the moon-child as

she brushed past them. Her feet crushed delicate waxen orchids and plants of blood-red hue. The mists rose as though the bridegroom of the earth raised his bride's veil to disclose the amorphous beauty of her features.

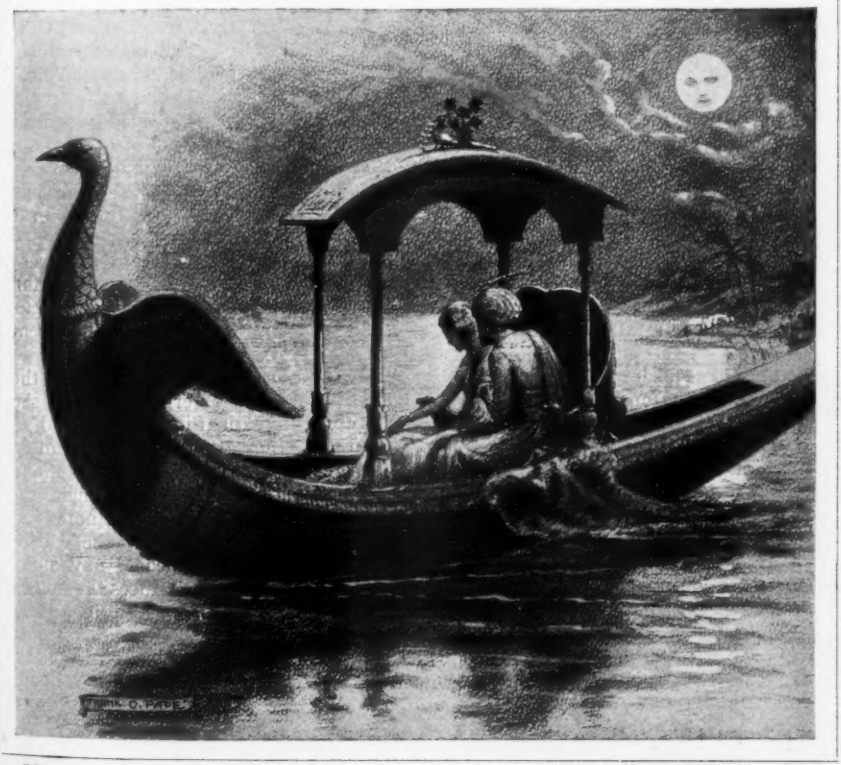
As the sun from out the iridescent east sent its first shaft of gorgeous golden light of living fire right into the centre of the silver river, the woodman led his strange bride into his palm and bamboo house, beneath the shade of a huge mango tree. There the moon-child grew happier. She looked through square openings that did duty for windows and laughed at the inquisitive faces peering at her through the bamboo bars that marked off the small patch of red soil owned by the woodman.

. . . . . .

More than two years passed away. The child-wife was bitterly disappointed because she could not feel the passionate love which she so wistfully desired. She worked hard in the woodman's house, while outside the village maids were jealous of her wondrous beauty. She had to hide her tears as best she could. At night she often stole out and confided her sorrows to the inquisitive moon-children who crept down the silver moonbeams to learn what had happened to their wayward sister.

. . . . . .

Her time on earth had only three more months to run and at the prospect she was not sad. She went more joyfully to draw water at the bubbling stream, where she lingered under the cool shadows of the over-branching trees, and there listened, with a smile,



"She laughed, for she knew her vain moon-mother would see her; for it was the hour the moon-mother wooed the drowsy river and looked at her reflection in the mirror of his waters."

to the bright-eyed, copper-coloured maidens who jeered at her because her mad husband told a wonderful tale of how he had found her on a Moghra flower in the jungle. They knew well he had bought her in some slave house where men go.

. . . .

One evening at the lilac hour of the sunset, at the end of a burning Indian summer day, the moon-child-wife sat by the rickety bamboo gate of her abode. She was sad and lonely, for the woodman had gone a journey. Her only joy seemed the prospect of returning to her moon-mother in less than three months.

As she threaded some red seeds, snatched from some wild jungle tree, she thought how foolish she had been to imagine human love to be so alluringly beautiful. There was no such thing. The happiness of earthly life was a pure delusion, like fanciful pictures seen in the globe of a deluded crystal-gazer. The shadow of a richly-dressed horseman passed across her. She looked up and saw the haughty Rajah, who had recently returned to the kingdom on the death of his father. He glanced above the heads of his subservient people, who bowed their brown bodies. The moon-child-wife did not understand the custom, and looked with full confidence at the handsome arrogant face of the young Rajah. He turned his jewelled, blue-turbaned head with a flash of anger to order his white-robed attendant to chastise the girl who showed him no reverence. But his anger turned aside and a strange emotion swept over him, as a wave that leaps to greet the swimmer in a coral-bound sea. He looked with half-closed eyes at the beautiful dusky maid ; round her bare neck was a string of red beads, and in her dark hair nestled a pink hibiscus flower from out of the jungle near. The Rajah sighed. He opened his eyes and looked full into the depths of the child-wife's wondering, full round orbs. He trembled. But with great control he passed onward with the mask of impassibility on his subtle Eastern face.

Out of sight of the villagers, he called his white-robed servant and inquired about the maid. He laughed as he heard the "fairy-tale" of her birth ; while in his secret thoughts he desired to see her and ask her for the truth of the strange story.

. . . . . .

In the illusory moonlight the young Rajah disguised himself as a wanderer and walked past the bamboo hut. The maid was not there ; and no voice, no sound was heard within. He was grieved, and to calm his fevered spirit pushed onward into the magic of the heavily-scented, tree-covered, vine-draped forest, where the goddess Coatlicue rules in her wonderful robe of serpents intertwined. The Rajah felt the strange mystic quiet of the tropics, as of a hushed sigh into which is pressed the passion of inert life.

Under the Babul trees, close to the drowsy silver river, in which the Moon, womanly only in her vanity, admired her mirrored beauty, there sat the moon-child-wife. Her head was bent as she whispered to an unseen sister, sitting on the end of a moonbeam, of the disappointments of the earthly life.

The beautiful young Rajah bent over her.

"I have found you! My flower! My jewel!" he cried through his full lips, rich with the blood of passionate desires. For the sight of her bent form had aroused his love.

The moon-child looked up into the beauty of his Eastern face ; and she trembled like a leaf in a warm wind.

Across the ethereal wonder of a starry, purple sky a disturbed crane flew, crying its fear to the jungle. A blackbird answered with one note.

Hindu philosophers say the end of music is to affect the heart—nay, more, they affirm music reproduces the sounds of certain animals, each note having its own sentiment ; and the notes of the crane and the blackbird inspire humour and love.

. . . . . .

The Rajah sat close to the lap of the broad river in the great stillness of the

"As the fiery flush of the rising sun flooded the land she reached the arms of the moon-mother."

languid, sensuous Indian night, in which there is never a sense of loneliness. In his arms he held the trembling moon-child-wife.

He told her she was for ever his beloved. Her breath was as the gentle south sea wind blowing over spice fields; her eyes were fallen stars, and her teeth seed-pearls washed by the white froth of a crystal lake; her lips were coral from the depths where love

alone doth dwell; and the scent of her hair was of jasmine and of tube-rose.

To his deep full voice the moon-child-wife listened in an ecstasy she dared not dissect for fear it would prove a mirage of the fickle night. When she told him of her birth, he laughed in unbelief. And when she told him she had no love for the woodman, he swore with a pious oath to a heathen god she would be rid of him without delay. And when she whispered she was happy with him, as her cousins the sunbeams dancing in the light of a summer afternoon, he bent and kissed the coral of her lips.

. . . . . .

The woodman disappeared, none knew where nor how. And in the hush of the wonderful tropical night, draped in her shroud of silver gauze shot with blue, the child-wife played with the beautiful exotic flowers her lover had plucked in the garden of his Eastern palace. By his side she laughed, for she had become an earth-child. But by day her eyes were red with weeping. She realised her time to return to her moon-mother drew dangerously nearer.

. . . . . .

One night, when the fragrant jungle flowers bowed their dew-washed heads in sleep and exuded strange intoxicating aromatic perfumes, her lover took her in a boat on the silver river. She laughed, for she knew her vain moon-mother would see her; for it was the hour the moon-mother wooed the drowsy river and looked long at her reflection in the mirror of his waters. Round the moon-child's neck the Rajah placed a wonderful rope of pure pearls, gathered at great price from the jealous depths of an Oriental sea. The moon-child-wife looked into his face and asked how he could give her such a priceless gift. He laughed and told her he was the Rajah and had many more wondrous coloured gems—topaz, blue diamonds and rubies snatched from the secretive earth in the mines of Mogok, beyond fair Mandalay—which would be hers when she came to his palace, besides silk robes and scarves of soft gauze and silver anklets hung with tiny musical bells.

The child—she appeared but fifteen—turned away her head, and tears welled in her eyes. The Rajah took her in his arms; he kissed her softly-tinted cheek, her coral lips, her scented hair; and once more she smiled and forgot she had but one more night on earth.

They landed on a small palm-clad island. The child in her happiness threw off the bodice of her gaudy-hued dress. In the moonlight her dark amber body seemed luminous as it swayed gently, like a strand of delicately-scented wistaria in a spring breeze, while she danced for the satisfaction of the man who had given her the joy of knowing love.

The next night they met beneath the Babul trees by the drowsy river. During the day a golden-leafed vine had decked itself in heavily-scented crimson and purple flowers, as though to form a marriage bower.

"My king! My dearest heart! It is our last meeting," the moon-child-wife whispered in a broken voice of intense sadness that hardly knows expression. "You did not believe the story of my birth, and I was glad; for I was of the world of children who ever love a secret. Now I am a woman; and through you have learnt to love life. When dawn breaks away the walls of night I must return to the shadow land of the Moon and travel westward. There is no longer any rest for me."

"No, no!" the Rajah cried with the confidence of one who rules. "Fate has given you to me. Fate cannot be denied or thrust aside. It is as inexorable as the birth of life and those exquisite joys that defy the garb of words."

"To-night my earthly life is over, and I must go back at dawn to my mother, the Moon." The coral lips of the moon-child-wife trembled as she spoke. "I never dared reveal the truth. I was afraid to lose your love. I am not mortal; and I must pass away like the sigh of a desert wind. My beloved, you have taught me what alone I desired to know. I was a child

—you have given me love, the crown of a woman's life."

The Rajah held her close. He told her she only taunted him with foolish words to force his lips to whisper of his passionate love. She would stay with him by force, for she was more precious than all the wealth of his kingdom. By his great love he would give her mortality. "We shall cry in our happiness, in the voice of the Buddha, 'Seen or unseen, near or afar, born or seeking birth, let all things be joyful.'" He paused before he added: "Together we shall enter Nirvana when the all-powerful Voice calls with relentless words that none dare disobey."

The shrill call of a peacock broke the stillness of the sensuous night, and a wild ox replied.

The Hindu philosophers declare in their cries are heroism, wonder, terror. And into the hearts of men who hear, such emotions are mysteriously born. The Rajah's hand shook as he clasped round the moon-child's neck an emerald snake with glistening ruby eyes, such as might have been torn from the dress of the Goddess of Tropical Flowers—Coatlicue.

Moonstones and pearls were all the moon-child had played with before she became an earth-child, and with the bewildering beauty of the Rajah's jewels she was entranced; she forgot all else—even the sting of the cruel lash of the twined cords of inexorable Fate. She clasped and unclasped the necklet. She kissed the emeralds, the rubies, and laughed—a sound like temple bells heard across a swaying rice field.

As the jealously-hushed night drifted onward to the west, the moon-child arose from the Rajah's side. She looked with glistening, quivering eyelids at his sleeping form. Earthly life had taught her, as her lover had lately affirmed, that Fate is marked out, and can no more be avoided than the birth and age and death of man and woman in the world of human souls. The moon-child bent low and reverently kissed the lips of the sleeping man, who smiled as though his dreams were sweet. The light of day had grown bright, and had already lit the vapours of the night with faint prismatic shadows, through which the moon looked pale and sickly, as one who has spent the night in feasting and revelry. The forewarning breath of dawn breathed softly over the jungles, the great rivers and the mighty plains of India, and played gently with the scented hair of the moon-child as she sped through the jungle searching for a last moonbeam on which to drift back to the bosom of her mother. All the way she shed tears of love, and paid no heed to the waking birds and flowers, moving at the call of the approaching day.

As the fiery flush of the rising sun flooded the land she reached the arms of the moon-mother; they folded round her as the child piteously cried, "The Buddha was cruel. His words are hideously true. 'Life is like a whirlpool wherein we are dashed to and fro by our passions!'"

Looking down into the fading depths of the regal grandeur of the gorgeously-decked jungle—for the moon was travelling westward—the child dropped silver tears.

And all the tears she wept in the jungle and onwards, westward, took wings and flew through the woods, and when men saw them in the cool of the dreamy night they called them fireflies.

It is many, many generations since these tears were shed; but on warm summer nights the fireflies still go flickering from leaf to leaf, flower to flower, searching for the Rajah, who died of love-denied in the full beauty of his youth. Yet men laugh when children tell them they are the winged tears of the moon-child-wife of the Hindu woodman, who loved the beautiful Rajah in an Indian jungle hundreds of years ago.

"PERSUASION."

BY LAURENCE HOUSMAN

"*THE LESSON.*"

AT dinner Miss Jane made a series of scenes
By always refusing fat bacon and beans.
Though long at the table Mamma made her wait,
Tied fast to her chair, she still pushed back her plate.

Said patient Mamma "I must teach you, my sweet,
That what mothers provide little daughters must eat:
So if you refuse to obey as I've said
Without any supper I'll send you to bed!"

Then up to her chamber she carried Miss Jane,
And there at the washstand she bade her remain;
And setting the plate where the soap-dish should be,
Remarked "I'll return when the bell rings for tea."

She quitted the room; but I'm sorry to state
That scarce had she gone than Miss Jane from her plate
Conveys to her sponge-bag, rolled up in a ball,
Her dinner-time portion, beans, bacon, and all!

With this in her pocket she waits till Mamma
Re-enters; who, noting the clearance, cries "Ah!"
When the pains that may follow are plain to their eyes,
One frequently finds little girls become wise!

"I think we've accomplished one lesson to-day,
So now you may run in the garden and play;
And to teach you how kind a Mamma I can be
To good girls, you may have currant jam for your tea."

Then off with her sponge-bag went Jane at a bound,
And emptied it out in a hole in the ground;
And back she came, looking as good as could be,
Quite hungry, and took currant jam for her tea.

Mamma sitting by, to improve the occasion,
Remarked to Aunt Ruth that a little persuasion,
When wisely applied, was a wonderful cure.
"Why, of course," said Aunt Ruth, "so it is, to be sure!

"*THE LESSON APPLIED.*"

When Jane, ill-advised, though her mother was firm,
Attempted to give her canary a worm,
Forgetting her manners she cried in a rage,
"He must do as I like while he lives in my cage!"

When Mamma had departed—oh, what do you think?
She emptied his seed-trough and gave him no drink,
So, leaving him supperless, went to her bed,
And returned the next morning to find he was dead

Then entered Mamma, and perceiving the slain,
"Pray what does this mean?" she demanded of Jane:
And as Jane made reply in the vaguest of terms,
"I believe," cried Mamma, "you've been giving him worms!"

"I didn't," cried Jane. "But suppose that I did,
He was mine; and he ought to have done as I bid:
But I promise, Mamma, that whatever it means,
I didn't go giving him bacon and beans!"

If by this Jane supposed she was saving her bacon,
Next moment she found herself greatly mistaken;
You, too, gentle reader, know well what it means
To yourself, when your mother starts giving you beans.

THE STORY OF THE COLD QUEEN.

BY ALFRED OLLIVANT.

ILLUSTRATED BY HERBERT COLE.

ONCE there was a Cold Queen.

And she was so cold because her heart was white as ice.

And the Old Sun loved her and shone upon her, hoping that he would thaw her.

But she would not be thawed.

Instead she walked about in his sunshine with her nose stuck up, and would have nothing to do with him.

Then the Old Sun, who was a loving old fellow, when he saw that, sighed and said :

" Why are you such a Cold Queen ? "

But she only snapped :

" Because I am."

Then the Old Sun just said :

" Won't you love me ? "

But the Cold Queen snapped back again :

" No, I won't."

So the Old Sun said very gently :

" Then I think I'll go out."

And he began to go out.

And it grew darker and darker and colder and colder.

And there was no more sunshine for the Cold Queen to walk in.

So she walked in darkness, with her nose down.

And she was so cold that she began to shiver.

Then the Old Sun, when he heard her shivering, said very sleepily, for he was almost out :

" Why are you shivering, my dear ? "

So the Cold Queen answered in a sort of a mutter, for she was pretty proud and didn't want him to know how much she missed his warmth, although she *did* want him to know all the same :

" Because I am so cold, o' course."

Then the Old Sun roused a bit and said :

" D'you need my warmth ? "

But the Cold Queen said nothing ; only she hoped all the same.

Then the Old Sun began to shine on her again, and said :

" I'm glad you missed me."

But when the Cold Queen felt the Sun on her again, she said :

" Rubbish ! I didn't," and walked about in the pale sunshine with her nose stuck up just as before.

So the Old Sun said very gently :

" Very well, my dear," and began to go out again.

But all the Cold Queen said was :

" Don't call me my dear."

" All right," said the Old Sun from far away.

And he went out and out till at last there was left only one tiny red glow in the middle of the dark, like a candle after it has been blown out. And any moment it might go out, too.

Then it would all be pitch black for ever.

And when the Cold Queen saw that she began to be afraid.

And she ran about in the dark and thawed, so that true tears ran down her cheeks : for underneath the cold, her

"She walked about in his sunshine with her nose stuck up, and would have nothing to do with him."

heart, though it was white as ice, was warm as roses. Only she liked to pretend she was cold—partly out of pride, partly to tease, and partly because she thought it was good for the Old Sun and would teach him: but really he didn't want teaching, for he had learnt it all before, being pretty old.

Meanwhile the Old Sun went on with his going out.

And it was pitchy black by now with only a tiny red glow in the middle, and that growing less and less every minute.

Then the Cold Queen got in a great state. For really she loved the Old Sun like anything: he was such a good old fellow, and shone upon her as he shone on no one else.

And she wanted to walk in his sun

shine again ; and she wanted to see him as he used to be—shining and busy and bright.

And the Cold Queen didn't know much, being pretty young ; but she knew that if the Old Sun went out quite, she would never be able to light him again.

So she went down on her two knees—yes, truly, on her two knees (of course it was in the dark), and the tears trickled down, and she said :

" Dear Old Sun, whom I love best in all the world, don't go out quite—there's a darling Old Sun ! and I'll love you for always and always ! "

Then the Old Sun said very drowsily :

" I'm so far gone I'm afraid there ain't much chance—not much, I'm afraid."

Then the Cold Queen held his hand and sobbed in his ear :

" Dear Old Sun, can't I help you ? "

So the Old Sun said after a bit :

" Maybe you might."

Then the Cold Queen shivered and said :

" Dear Old Sun, how ? "

So the Old Sun said with a little wink, for it was dark—

" Blow on me."

Then the Cold Queen blew on him.

But the dear Old Sun just lay on his back with his eyes shut, pretending he was very bad indeed, and all he said was :

" Oh ! " and " Ah ! "

Then the Cold Queen said :

" Is it better now ? "

So the Old Sun groaned a bit and answered :

" Not much. Blow some more please."

Then the Cold Queen said, between her tears :

" Are you *trying* to come round, dear Old Sun ? You must *try*. Else it's not fair."

But the Old Sun only said rather gruffly :

" I'm doing my best, my dear. You go on with your blowing."

So the Cold Queen blew and she blew.

And at last he began to shine again a little.

" Now you're coming round, dear Old Sun," said the Cold Queen.

" Dunno," said the Old Sun, " I feel mighty queer yet. Doubt if I'll ever be the same Sun again. Keep on with that blowing, there's a good girl."

" D'you like it ? " smiled the Cold Queen.

" Well, I don't know as I mind it," said the tricky Old Sun. And really he loved it. And he took much longer than he needed to come round for that reason.

So the Cold Queen blew, and she blew till she was warm all over.

Then all of a sudden the Old Sun blazed out upon her.

And she stopped blowing and kneeled back.

And she put her hands before her face to hide it.

But the Old Sun took them away very tenderly.

And he shone upon her face, and it was hot, with tears on it, and he whispered :

" Cold Queen, you are a Warm Queen now, aren't you ? "

But she said nothing.

"Woods and woods of Christmas Trees."

IN THE WONDER WORLD OF SNOW.

THE WINTER SPORTSMAN'S STORY.

BY LILIAN LE MESURIER.

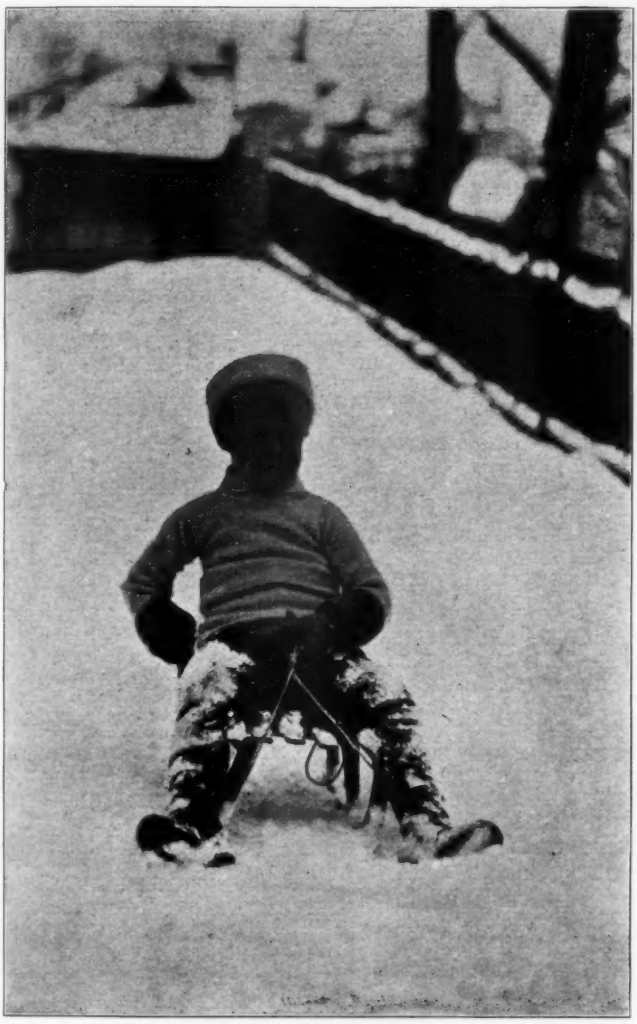
ILLUSTRATED BY WILL CADBY.

I WENT not very long ago
To such a wonder world of snow;
I had a most delicious time,
I'll tell you, if you like, in rhyme.

We travelled in a ship and trains,
Until my legs were stiff with pains,
Then in a sledge with jingling bells,
Up miles and mounts, past dales and dells
Where fairies live, my mother said,
(She tells me fairy tales in bed),
Past waterfalls and streams that freeze,
Through woods and woods of Christmas-trees,
Until, as I am glad to tell,
We came at last to our hotel.

Now luging is a lovely thing
(Some people say "tobogganing"),
You seem to fly, you want to sing,
You call out, "Achtung," "Gare," "Look out!"
And finish with an English shout,
You rush round corners, fierce and fast,
You think each moment is the last!
And if you tumble in the snow
It's just the best of jokes, you know.

And skating is a joy of joys,
But not at first for girls and boys.
I used to struggle round the rink
And clutch a grown-up's hand, and think



"Now luging is a lovely thing."

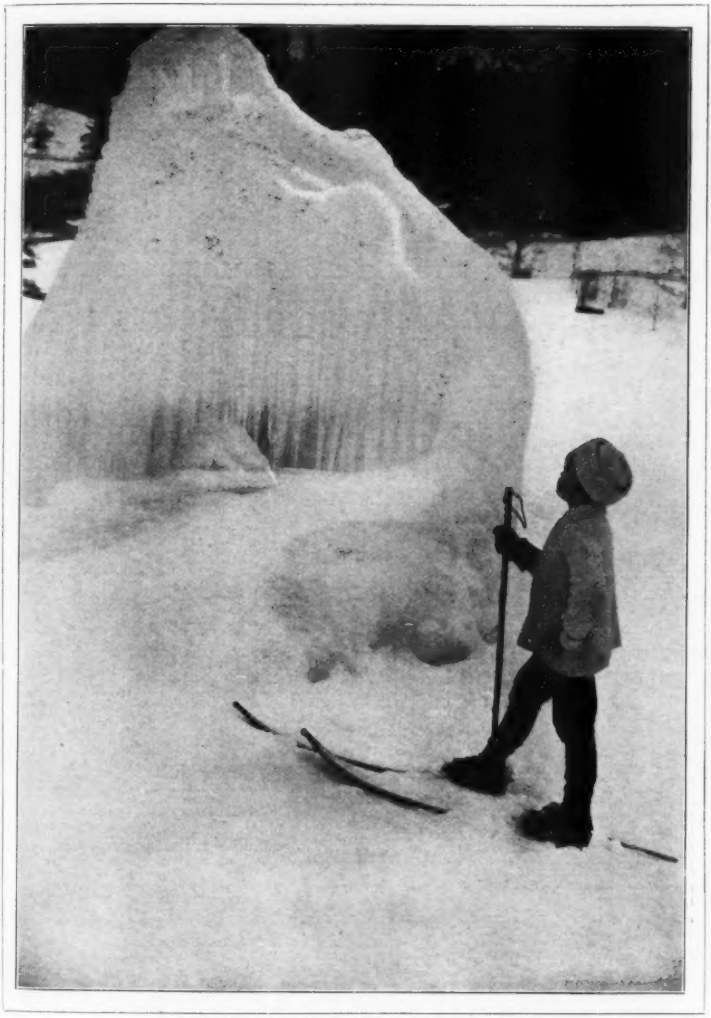
That I should *never* skate alone,
And sometimes felt quite cross I own.
It's not the bangs and bumps I mind
(Though ice is rather hard I find),

But it does make a person cross
When skates are like a bolting horse!
They kick and run away and rear,
And sometimes throw you clean and clear!

My feet and legs got tangled round,
My ski all mixed up with the ground

Now I forget that vexing past
For I can skate alone and fast.
And now I have a lovely play
That I'm a yacht upon the bay.

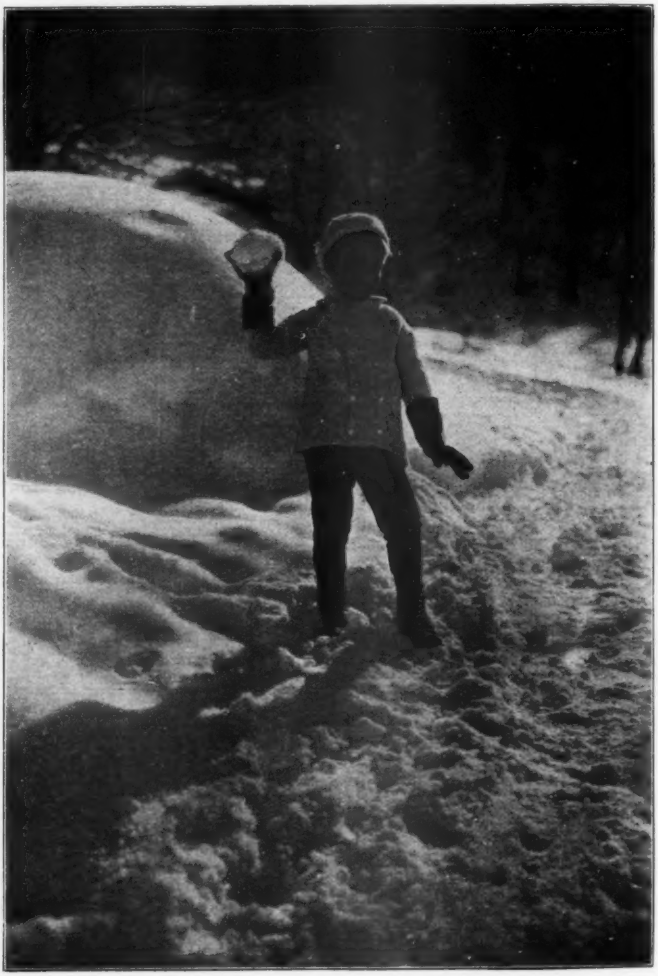
I bend my sails to meet the breeze,—
Or else I change it, if I please,
And play that I'm the night express
Just rushing North to Inverness



"I simply stand and gaze and gaze."

Now as to ski-ing, I must say,
Though skates and luges in their way
Are quite as nice as can be guessed,
Yet ski-ing is the very best.
When first I had a little pair
Of ski, I felt I could not bear

To have them taken off at night,
They gave me such immense delight.
My mother, very kindly, said
That I might keep them near my bed,



"I pelt my mother with the snow."

And so when I awoke next day
The first thing that I saw was they!

I put them on and flat I fell
(For this is truth I have to tell).

My feet and legs got tangled round,
My ski all mixed up with the ground!
I lay quite helpless on my back
Like fishes in a fishing-smack,
And struggled long, but long in vain,
To get upon my feet again.

My nurse and mother lent a hand,
Though they themselves could hardly stand;
My ski-sticks slid away from me
Instead of helping helpfully.

"And the great mountains, stern and white,
Like guards on duty day and night."

It seemed I had to fall and fall,
Yet,—ski-ing is the best of all!
And when I ski-ed right down a hill
Oh! that made up for every ill.
Like nothing that I've seen or heard
It made me feel I was a bird.

And now I've splendid games on ski
Exploring many a frozen sea;
I'm Shackleton, or Scott, you know,
Wading waist-deep through fields of snow;
I find the South Pole here, or there
I hunt the shaggy polar bear;

I shoot the walrus and the seals
And lay king penguins by the heels ;
I drag my trophies on the ice,—
—Pretending things is always nice.

I find out fairy grottos, too,
They are so wonderfully blue.
Like Christopher Columbus, I
Gaze at them with a kindling eye,
Spell-bound with rapture and amaze
I simply stand and gaze and gaze,
Too rapt to speak or even stir
(Like every great discoverer !)

But sometimes when these games are done
I have just ordinary fun.
I romp and tumble down, you know
And pelt my mother with the snow,
And then we laugh so, she and I,
We quite surprise the passers-by !

Now this I know, if you go too,
And see the sky so bluest blue,
And the great mountains, stern and white,
Like guards on duty day and night,
You'll find you cannot keep away
From all this splendid winter play.
And when the time comes round next year
And Christmas holidays are near,
You'll take your ticket for the train
And you will surely come again.

" You rush round corners, fierce and fast "

TOMMY.

A TRAGEDY OF CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

BY DESMOND COKE.

TOMMY'S charm did not lie in his looks.

His limbs were skinny and too long for his inches ; he gazed coldly at the world through hard, black eyes ; his teeth were strangely like two rows of beads sewn upon the surface of his countenance. He did not differ, in fact, so far as looks go, from any other of his race ; he was a typical toy "hairy monkey."

But Eva loved him with a love seldom lavished on his kind. From the day that Tommy came into her hands she abjured the race of dolls, and sat hour after hour holding Tommy's soft form in her loving arms, fondly kissing his boot-button eyes. Mrs. Percy did not really approve of her daughter's infatuation. It seemed to her that, in a girl of eight, a taste for dolls would show a more housewifely disposition. When Christmas came she bought a lovely waxen creature that said "Mam-ma," closed its eyes, and made no protest at the doffing of its elaborate costume. Eva put it in the cupboard, and told Tommy, fondly but fully, exactly what she thought of dolls ; she valued them no more than babies. . . . Mrs. Percy tried a compromise upon her girl's ninth birthday, and bought a hairy monkey that had a waxen face inserted half-way up its furry body—somewhat like the legendary Esquimaux. This Eva regarded as an insult to the tribe of monkeys. Expectant of a second Tommy, she burst, so soon as her mother had gone, into a storm of grief and anger. When Mrs. Percy came back some five minutes later she found Eva, hot tears coursing down her cheeks, hammering the waxen face savagely upon a chair-leg. . . .

It was now that she gave in. Four years saw a long succession of hairy monkeys, black, grey, white ; but through all Tommy held his kingship. When, at thirteen, Eva went to school, she took the whole tribe with her, wrapped in a brown paper parcel, which she held through all the journey, and smuggled somehow to her dormitory. When the lights were out she unpacked it, with much rustling, and laid her friends, as was the custom, in her bed, each with its little furry head set neatly on the pillow. They all slept with her, at this time six of them, but Tommy always next to her. It was their familiar presence that made this night, her first from home, seem bearable.

Next evening when she came upstairs she found a laughing crowd about her bed. The witty housemaid had formed a tableau with the discovered monkeys, out on the counterpane, for all to see. The audience was certainly appreciative.

"Here's the keeper of the monkey-house!" cried one of the tallest girls, as Eva, in shame and misery, drew near and made a grab to rescue her beloved pets. The tall girl seized Tommy—Tommy!—and ran towards the washing-stand. "Let's drown them!" she cried. Eva did not stop to think. She dashed after Tommy's captor, gripped her wrist, and, in a burst of helpless fury, bit it almost to the bone. A good deal was said, but nothing more was done. Eva, defiant

outwardly, inwardly ashamed, clambered into bed, and hugged a tear-wet Tommy till sleep came upon her.

Possibly the girls admired her courage, or perhaps the natural child struggled up through the assumed young woman. One by one they came to take an interest in Tommy and the others. They asked questions as to name, age, character of each, and Eva loved to answer them. Finally, one or two even begged the loan, now and then, of a monkey—but Eva never gave them Tommy.

She went home at the end of term with something of the feelings of a conqueror. She had just ranged the monkeys safely on their familiar seat, the chest of drawers, when Gertrude entered. Gertrude was Eva's senior by seven years, a cold, stately creature, and the two sisters lived in a truceless state of feud.

"You *don't* mean to say," began the elder, "that you took those ridiculous monkeys to school?"

"Of course I did."

"I thought you'd given them away or something. What a kid you are, Eva! Fancy taking—of course, you *can't* do it again. Why, you're thirteen now!"

She moved towards the row of monkeys, leaning, in precedence of age, against the wall. Eva, too, in instinct of defence, stepped forward. Gertrude possibly observed the motion.

"Oh, *I* won't touch them—did 'ums! You can play with them here; only"—she drew nearer, critically—"that one is too filthy!"

She clearly looked for opposition, and forestalled it. By an incredibly swift turn of the wrist she seized Tommy and hurled him at the fire. Gertrude at school had been a cricketer, and Tommy fell straight into the blazing coals with a little fizzle and a sudden flare. Eva rushed forward, but Gertrude, laughing, caught her by the shoulder, and held her so for half a minute. Eva struggled, shouted, cried, but Gertrude held her until Tommy showed only as a blazing mass; then she let go, so roughly that she threw her forward on the carpet.

"Little idiot!" she cried impatiently and left the room.

Eva, not weighing results or planning actions, thinking of nothing but her darling Tommy, ran to the fire and plunged her hand into the leaping flame. Instinctively she drew it out hurriedly without its prize.

"Tommy, Tommy!" she cried, as though the name could bring him back to her.

Long after Gertrude had gone she lay sobbing there, not for her smarting fingers—that was nothing—but for loneliness and pain of heart.

. . . . . .

"What on earth was all the noise upstairs, dear?" Mrs. Percy asked, as Gertrude entered, rather breathless.

"Oh, I was burning one of Eva's monkeys, that's all." She looked anxiously towards her mother. She was just beginning to feel that possibly she had been rather brutal.

"It was terribly filthy," she added, in a justifying tone. "She'd had it for years, and it had lost one eye, and in places was quite hairless, like a dirty glove."

Dear old Mrs. Percy shuddered. "I've often told Eva to throw them away," she said, settling once more to her knitting. "It's high time she got over all that nonsense."

THE STORY BOOK.

Captain Watkin's Christmas:

OR, THE MYSTERY OF PLAS ARAWN.

By OWEN VAUGHAN.

I.

THE MEETING AT THE OLD HOSTELRY.

DECEMBER dusk was falling fast about the two horsemen, but Hereford town was yonder just in front; too near for them to fear losing the highway or to fear meeting highwaymen before reaching it. To tell the truth, they hardly looked like men that would fear highwaymen. There was too much of the cavalry cut about both master and man of them; for master and man they were by every sign.

As they passed a hedge alehouse the sound of a full bucolic chorus came out uproarious on the dusk. Said the man, jogging along just in rear of his master's elbow: "Sir, there's a vast o' difference between this and the same day last year!"

"Ah!" returned the master. "Better this than Spain then—that's your motto, is it, Boyle?"

"I wasn't thinkin' o' the country, sir. I was thinkin' o' the day. This is the 23rd: the 23rd o' December. D'you remember what happened on the 23rd last year?"

"A dust with old Soult, I suppose. We were so busy with the French all last December that I've forgotten the details."

"Yes, sir. And we had just dusted Debelle's Dragoons in that rare bustle at Sahagun. But it was on the 23rd that Sir John Moore gave us the order for the retreat for Corunna. You'll remember how we swore at that, sir."

The other shook his head in the gloom. "We did. Poor Sir John! Well for us he was in command. Any other general—and Napoleon would have wiped us out."

"Would he, sir?" Boyle's voice was stubborn with dissent. He was none so sure that old Boney could have wiped out any British Army. He changed his ground. "At any rate, we'll have a better Christmas this year than last, sir."

"That's to be seen. I'm not so sure," returned his master, dissentingly. "There's far from a welcome waiting for us where we're going, if they find out who I am. In fact, I'm thinking it will be wiser to drop part of my name. Instead of being Captain Watkin Gibbon, I'd better be Captain Watkin only. So remember, Boyle; from leaving Hereford to-morrow morning we'll proceed as in an enemy's country, and my name will be Captain Watkin."

"Better begin to-night, then, sir," urged the man. "You don't know what spies may be in Hereford to-night."

The captain seemed a bit amused. "Not quite that. They don't even know that I'm alive. Still, somebody

from the place might be in Hereford and might become inquisitive if they heard my name. Better be sure than sorry. We'll begin here then."

"That's wisdom, Captain Watkin," assented Boyle, practising the name.

When they came to the town and drew rein, in front of the oldest inn in that city of ancient hostelries, the captain was Captain Watkin, right and ready, and all the evening the host found him as undrawable as an oyster. It was the cautious Boyle who could not help but air the mystery a little in the stables out behind.

Said the ostler to Boyle, as they together tended the horses. "You'll be reckonin' on a Merry Christmas enough where you be headin' for."

Boyle shook his head gloomily. "How merry is things a day's ride or so to the nor'-west o' this?"

"Oh! Oh!" quoth the ostler with quick gusts.

"That's it, is it? Up in them hills, is it? Ah! then—up in them hills!" He shook his head sagely at the finish of that remark.

"So that's it, is it?" demanded Boyle discontentedly. "Blow them 'ills, then, an' blow all such Christmases, I says."

"An'—keep your powder dry, too, I says," chimed in the ostler. "Keep your powder dry, an' your primin' clear. That's all." He was very decided about that, was the ostler.

That decidedness provoked Boyle's stubbornness. He snapped his finger and thumb. "Powder dry! That's the game, is it? Let them try it on—that's all!" He was quite as decided as the ostler.

But the ostler was not to be browbeaten like that. He just shook his head shrewdly, and smiled, and kept on smiling, till at last Boyle broke into words again. "Them 'ills! What's in them blasted 'ills anyway, that you keep shakin' that wooden phiz o' yours an' grinnin' like a Cheshire cat with a pain inside it?"

"Ah!" returned the ostler sagely. "Them 'ills! we leaves them 'ills alone an' only wants them to leave us alone. We don't care what's in them 'ills so long as they don't come near us. We're satisfied if they are."

"So you are, are you?" sniffed Boyle.

"Sometimes," went on the ostler, with a fresh shake of the head, "sometimes they brings one here an' hangs him, or it may be a couple of 'em. But it's not us brings 'em down; it's the 'ills themselves brings 'em here to hang 'em. Calls it sheep stealin' or some'at o' that sort, but there's always some killin' behind that. We don't ask. We just hangs what they've brought down, an' back they goes till somebody else brings *them* down an' we hangs them in their turn."

"You don't ask, eh?" picked up Boyle. "Well, maybe we won't ask when we're up there. Maybe they'll tell us without askin'. You ask me when we come back. P'r'aps I'll tell you an' p'r'aps I won't. We'll see."

"So long as it's you that goes to find out an' not me," returned the ostler, with a wise shake of the head. "So long as it's you an' not me——"

II.

THE CAVERN IN THE HILLS.

Even next morning at dawn, when Boyle mounted to ride with his master on their journey, the ostler was still shaking his head warningly over "them 'ills! Ah! them 'ills!"

But Boyle pulled himself together heartily and damned the hills, and the ostler to boot, with the greatest cheeriness. Dawn, and another day all in front of him, is ever a wonderful heartener of the old soldier. Any good luck may come before night. So Boyle whistled a stave as he followed his master.

Day broadened, but the dark grey clouds, drawing so steadily down from the north, never let it come to full daylight. Steadily the two rode on, the captain ever silent a length in front, the man ever as silent a length behind. Old soldiers do not need to talk merely because they have nothing to say.

At noon they dined in an old, old market town, that had lain asleep since the last clan battle had been fought in its streets. At three in the afternoon the ever-narrowing valley they followed suddenly came full-butt against the

dark breast of a great wild hill. The only sign of humanity in all the weird scene was a two-roomed cavern of a tavern, built of vast boulders and monoliths, squatting out on the last hand's-breadth of level ground, almost under the spray of the cataract by which the brawling river bundled itself down from the heights above.

On the roof—or on the upper slopes of the top of the cavern rather—a lean billy goat wagged his beard in pretence of browsing the sere weeds that grew yard-high among the stones and slates and thatch up there—but palpably that goat was some gnome doing sentinel for the troglodytes within, if looks and manner went for anything. Two bedlamite coolies below were yapping and yelping deafeningly, a couple of lurchers were stealthily weaving round and about the riders, showing their teeth with grim suggestiveness. No man came out of the cavern, but a bush of broom hanging above the troglodytic entrance proclaimed in the old-world way that here was ale to sell and bread and cheese to steady it down withal.

The captain saw that bush of broom, and straightway drew his rein. He cast an eye ahead, along the continuation of the bridle track they had followed so far, and saw that it disappeared into the tangle of the wild glyn a few lengths further on. He cast an eye back the way they had come, the way where snug inns were and a wise-like world, and he shook his head a bit. He took a square look at this prehistoric den of a habitation, and then he spoke to his man.

"Boyle! if this is a tavern, then it means there'll be no other one till the other side these mountains, no matter how far that is. We'd best bait here while we've a chance. Rouse them out."

By way of obeying Boyle grabbed a stone from the eaves of the cavern and flung it banging against the door of the low entrance-tunnel. Then, and not till then, emerged a doubled-up man, who continued his movement till he had extended himself upright to full two yards and a hand-breath. Dark, close-lipped, clean-shaven; the flap of his waistcoat showed the bulge of a brace of pistol-butts as he stood and looked as squarely at the captain as the captain looked at him.

In the captain's mind his impressions were plain and blunt. "Sheep stealer! Cattle thief! Horse thief! Foot-pad! Cut-throat! Anything that crops up!"

The troglodyte's mental summing-up was no less blunt. "Highwaymen!—or preventive officers!"

Aloud the captain asked a question. "How far is it to the next inn along this road?"

"Which way you wass go?" demanded the other.

"Along the road," retorted the captain stubbornly.

"It split into two on top of 'e mountain," retorted the troglodyte, as stubbornly.

"And where does the right-hand one go to?" demanded the captain, impatiently.

"Cross 'e mountain."

"Ah—and where does the other one go?"

"Cross 'e mountain."

The captain grew sarcastic. "Vastly clever of 'em! And how far is it to the nearest inn or mansion on either of those roads?"

"I liffe this side 'e mountain. I not go to the other side." The troglodyte was all suave obstinacy.

The captain's temper got thoroughly out of hand. "Then we *will* go to the other side of the mountain," he retorted, lifting his rein to go.

His temper was not done with him yet though. Before he was well started he checked again. He held out a guinea. "See that?" he demanded of the troglodyte. "That's for you if you'll guide me to Plas Arawn."

"What you want at Plas Arawn?" demanded the troglodyte, suddenly alive with suspicion.

"That's my business," retorted the captain. "Will you go?"

"No."

"Why not?" rasped the captain.

"That's my business," parodied the cave-man.

The captain's eyes narrowed as if thoughts of military methods of compulsion were rushing in his mind. But, before he could do or say more, out from the cave mouth emerged the first

of a succession of additional troglodytes, none quite so tall as the first, but all much of a muchness with him. Still the captain was game. He had not ridden in the great charge at Sahagun for nothing. He did not flinch. He still held out the guinea. "If you won't go with me I'll go alone. Come now, which is it?"

The troglodyte spoke stubbornly. "I'm taking no strangers to Plas Arawn."

"I'm hardly a stranger there," insisted the captain.

"Then why you want a guide?" snapped the other sharply.

But the captain was not caught yet. He put the guinea back in his pocket. He lifted his rein again. "Come, Boyle; we'll get on," he said. And on he rode.

Boyle rode after him, and neither spoke a word till they were well into the shelter of the thickets in the ravine ahead. Then Boyle began. "A good job we didn't go inside to bait. Seven of 'em they were. All with pistols, too. Good job we didn't dismount."

"Quite likely," assented the captain, sore over his defeat.

Boyle pressed his point. "And don't you think, captain, that they may be laying a trap for us at this very minute. They know all the short cuts. They may be slipping past us now to get ahead and lay for us further up this dingle. These thickets are just the place for such work. Remember how stragglers used to get cut off in Spain. If we were to cut out of this glyn on to the open hillside now, they'd have less chance."

The captain looked about. The place was just the place for an ambush. "That's good market sense," he admitted. "Yes, we'll take the hillside for it."

A smaller dingle, carrying a little torrent, cut in from the left just ahead of them. Up that dingle the captain turned, following the narrowest of sheep tracks. A few grey flakes of snow began to drift in the air. The clouds above grew darker. Neither man spoke. The captain, in front, seemed to heed nothing but his thoughts; stern thoughts by the look of his face.

III.

THE VOICE IN THE NIGHT.

Darker and wilder grew the world as they neared the head of the dingle, till, as they rode out upon the wide waste above, Boyle involuntarily loosened one of the great holster pistols at his saddle-bow. "The end o' the world!" he muttered to himself. "And—aye—here's the snow!"

He was right. The snow that had threatened all day came with a smothering sweep that blotted the world from sight, yet the captain still pressed on without a word. He was making a line to his right front, as if to cut back in on the main track where it must cross this high world after emerging from the head of the glyn. It was a right move. Had this mountain been a smooth plain it might have succeeded. As it was, the line led them into bogs and quagmires, watercourses and stony ravines; up and down and round and about, bush and brake and cliff and ledge, a nightmare of a wilderness. Over all they could see nothing ten yards off. The captain tried to keep his right breast to the storm for a guide, yet time and again he found himself drifting with the storm at his back, giving his horse the reins. Then darkness fell, swift as a cloak dropped over them. His obstinacy wavered. "The next cliff we come to, Boyle, we'll build a fire and camp there!"

He heard Boyle's stiff answer. "Very good, sir," and then he had no further interest in anything but his horse.

For his horse baulked. The captain held him hard with the rein upstorm and gave him a vicious rowelling with the spurs. All the captain's temper was back upon him. The horse snorted; reared (sufficient warning for any man not in a vile rage), and, as he came down again, missed his footing on the edge of some ledge. There was a wild instant of desperate flurry, in a vain attempt to regain a footing, and before the captain could cast himself free from the saddle, down they went,

horse and rider and stones and stars, storm and darkness, bush and crash and crushing pain together.

The next thing the captain knew was the snow falling very softly on his face while Boyle was holding his head. There was a taste of brandy in his mouth. "Where am I?' he demanded faintly.

"We came to a cliff, as you said, sir," replied Boyle, half frozen. "Shall I light a fire, as you said, and make camp here?"

"If you can," assented the captain. "My head's buzzing like a beehive."

"If you'll lie still," said Boyle, laying the captain's head down.

The cliff under the shelter of which they were had great spreads of ivy growing on it. Feeling along in the crannies Boyle soon found an old nest or two, sufficient to start upon. His tinder box did the rest, and by the light of a roaring fire he saw a space beneath an overhanging ledge which would shelter them.

When he went to help his captain there he found it no easy job. "Steady, Boyle," implored the captain, whimsically. "I've got sore bones at least, even if they don't turn out broken bones. I hope the horse wasn't hurt. Poor brute! He tried to save me. It's all my fault. Is he all right?"

"He must be, sir. I'd a deuce of a job to find you. I didn't see a sign of him. He's gone off to shelter somewhere."

"The deuce!" cried the captain. "Then I'm afoot as well as disabled. A nice, cheery, cheery Christmas Eve, Boyle. It wasn't much worse than this last year on the retreat."

"I'd like to shoot the seven gallows birds at that tavern," was Boyle's answer.

With a deal of help the captain got up on his feet again. With a deal of bad language and twists and turns he made himself sure that none of his chief bones were broken.

By the light of the fire, when they got to it, they found that his clothes were in a weary plight and that he had great cuts, as well as bruises, to salve and tie up as best they could, from the medicaments in Boyle's saddle bag. Moreover, there was none too much firewood about. "A Merry Christmas, Boyle," grinned the captain at last, faintly.

"Same to you, sir," answered Boyle, grinning sheepishly.

But down here the bitter blast of the north wind could not get at them, and as they watched how thick the snow fell, there in the firelight, the thankfulness of old campaigners came out in words. "Better here than out there in the blast, eh, Boyle?" spoke the captain.

"It is so, sir. It would ha' been Heaven help us 'fore long if we hadn't made camp," Boyle said; and then he suddenly broke off—"Hark! D'you hear that, sir?"

"I did! It's a woman's cry," returned the captain. "Hang these hurts! If I only had my horse now!"

"You'll ride mine, sir. I'll lead him. I'll get him," and away went Boyle to bring his horse from the bush yonder.

With groans, and grunts of bad words, the captain got mounted, but before they could start Boyle's genius flashed out again. "Better see to our primin', sir, first," he said, haling out his pistols. "It may be just the seven longshanks from down in the valley, calling like a woman to lead us on to them!"

"Maybe seven fiddlesticks, Boyle," retorted the captain. Yet still the old soldier in him stirred enough to make him to look at his primings before leaving the firelight. Then the cry came again and away they went. "Shout, Boyle!" cried the captain, helping with a shout of his own.

Forty yards on and they plumped into the captain's own horse, snugged into the lee part of a hazel thicket. He showed no sign of lameness, or of anything but a healthy unwillingness, as Boyle dragged him by main force from his shelter. In another minute master and man were each mounted on their own horses, and off again on their search.

Shouting again, they got an answer from close in their front (this time a wail as of utter exhaustion), and then not another sound, shout as they would as they hurried. "That's strange!" cried the captain, checking

by what in the gloom seemed a small bush. "The sound came from this very spot!"

"I'll fire a pistol—they'll hear that, if it's the seven," said Boyle, drawing a horse pistol.

IV.

THE WOMAN IN THE SNOW.

Before the captain could stop him, bang went the charge, and up under their horses' noses jumped the small bush. "You villains!" it shouted, in a voice between terror and anger: unmistakably a woman's voice. "You villains! to shoot a poor woman like me!"

"I didn't shoot you—I'm an old soldier," shouted Boyle, his voice jumpy with half panic fright that he might have done it.

"The deuce, madam!" exclaimed the captain. "You're lucky he didn't shoot you."

"Lucky! Lucky!" retorted the woman in a great voice of recovery.

"And you couldn't have blamed him," went on the captain briskly. "You knew we were here looking for you. You heard us here right over your head, and you never spoke."

"It's a trap, captain," put in Boyle excitedly. "What did she call us and then keep silent for? Come away and leave her to it. Come away," and he turned his own horse to go.

"Don't! Don't leave me!" cried the woman at that. She even caught the captain's bridle in her earnestness. "I'll perish!"

"Then, madam, why didn't you speak when we came to your call?" spoke the captain shrewdly.

"I was afraid. You were strangers! I knew by your voices you were strangers. We're afraid of strangers here," pleaded the woman.

"Strangers are not welcome at Plas Arawn," quoted the captain grimly.

"They're not," answered the woman earnestly.

"And why are you here instead of snug in Plas Arawn on Christmas Eve?" demanded the captain.

"I—I—ran away!" returned the woman confusedly.

"Well, sir," put in Boyle, "it's stopped snowing. She can keep on running away. I tell you it's a trap, sir."

"Take her up on your horse, then," returned the captain drily. "We'll take the trap to the fire and examine it."

Boyle obeyed. Whether he liked it or not he set the woman in his saddle sideways, while he led the horse. Now that the snow had ceased for a moment they could catch the glow of their fire, no more than a couple of hundred yards away, and head straight for it.

At the fire Boyle helped the woman down, the light showing her for a woman of middle age and decent station, with a good pair of dark eyes in a strong, handsome face. Yet she was so palpably half-frozen and wholly exhausted that Boyle's suspicions thawed, and he gave her a pull at the brandy-flask without waiting for orders. She was, in fact, so far gone that she swallowed the brandy without a hitch, and let him half carry her to a seat under the ledge without a remonstrance.

Presently the warmth and the brandy brought her round to clearness again. The captain, sitting beside her under the ledge, turned a shrewd eye on her. He decided on a random shot. "But, madam, Plas Arawn is so close—how came you to be so exhausted so quickly?"

"Close!" retorted the woman. "It is close—if you're a bullet or a hawk, to fly across the dingle! But if you're only a Christian, and must either go round the head of the dingle, or plough down and up across the dingle in this black night and snow——!" A toss of her head completed her meaning.

"Then, madam, what the deuce possessed you to leave Plas Arawn in a storm like this when you knew you must either go round the dingle or cross it?"

"The same thing as would have possessed you, for all you're a captain," returned the woman. "Seven men with swords and pistols, and swearing they'd burn me alive if I didn't come out and give 'em the keys. You'd have done the same as I did—

dropped out of the window and run away!"

"It would depend," returned the captain. "But do you mean that seven thieves broke into Plas Arawn and chased you out. Where was Morgan Gibbon and his men-servants all this while?"

"Morgan Gibbon was dead!" retorted the woman. "Morgan Gibbon had just fallen downstairs and broken his neck, so they said, and the seven thieves, as you call them, were his servants, turning on me, the housekeeper, who swore they'd murdered him."

"The deuce!" said the captain. "Come, madam, tell me the whole trouble, and I'll see what can be done."

The woman looked hard at his eyes for a full minute, considering him, before she could decide. Then, "What is your name?" she demanded bluntly.

"Captain Watkin," he returned suavely.

"Then get out a piece of paper and write down what I tell you," she said, as if she had decided to make a full deposition.

"The devil!" began the captain, feeling in first one coat pocket and then another. And as he haled forth a miscellaneous collection of odds and ends of paper from one pocket, out fell three old letters to the ground, two of them address side up. The woman stared at them, seized one and looked at it closer, followed suit with the second, and then turned over the third and looked at that likewise. "Captain Watkin Gibbon!" she read. Then she looked the captain square in the eye again.

He simply nodded, and stretched out his hand and took the letters from her. "A very nice man, too, is Captain Gibbon," was all he said, drily.

"And so you lied to me—calling yourself Captain Watkin," she began accusingly.

"Am I not Captain Watkin—Gibbon?" he jibed, meeting the accusation with a little tightening of the lips.

"You know you meant a lie," retorted the woman.

For answer the captain opened one of the letters and extracted an extra sheet enclosed in it. That sheet had a blank side. He smoothed it out and took out a pencil. "I'm ready to take down your story," he said.

The woman tossed her head. "Then tell it yourself. I'm likely to tell you anything after that," she snapped.

"Very good," returned the captain, imperturbably, putting up pencil and paper. "And now you can make yourself comfortable, while I and my man go on to Plas Arawn and investigate your story there. Good night." He got up to go.

V.

THE RIDE TO PLAS ARAWN.

The woman jumped up in quick fright. "You won't leave me here to perish! See, the snow is beginning again! You're an officer! You can't leave a poor woman to die."

The captain became judicial. "Madam, you made a statement. You said your master had been murdered by his servants. You said that you yourself would have been murdered but for escaping. It is my duty, as an officer, to get at the bottom of this at once. You need not stay here. You may come with me to Plas Arawn."

"And be killed by that seven?" she demanded, in fresh fright.

"Madam, myself and my man are both old soldiers. We will protect you to the extent of our lives. Is that enough?"

"Are you sure you will? Will you give me your solemn word of honour as an officer that after you get in you won't turn me out?"

"Madam," returned the captain coolly, "that's a queer speech to make; don't you think it is?"

She was taken aback for a breath, till a fresh inspiration plainly took her. "Can't you see I'm a woman in a horrible fright?" The retort was clever, but too palpably clever.

The captain nodded acquiescence. "Let Boyle assist you into his saddle again and we'll get away for Plas Arawn."

Boyle, who had all this while been reloading his pistol, looked sharply at

the woman. "Seven thieves you said. Were they all over two yards high, and gallows-birds in every look of them? Are they the seven thieves from that tavern down below?"

"What do you know of the seven from the tavern?" she demanded, all suspicion.

"No good," he retorted. "But I do know I shan't miss that longest of them if I get within twenty yards of him with this pistol."

Before the woman could answer, the captain cut in. "Boyle, get your horse for this lady—at once." And at that word "lady" the woman mellowed in a breath, as if she took the captain for her special champion.

He followed it up. "Madam, I would help you to mount, but as it happens I'm just too cursed stiff and sore. My horse came down here with me over the edge of this cliff, instead of round the end of it. Hence these tears"—but he indicated the tears in his clothing to illustrate the word.

"A wonder you were not killed," returned the woman.

"A pity I was not killed?" said the captain, as if he quoted her words.

But though the woman half opened her mouth to answer, she plainly thought better of it and kept silent. In another minute they were mounted and moving off.

Though Boyle was nominally leading her horse, yet the woman took the reins and guided him with an unconscious sureness that showed her quite at home, both on a horse and in that country—exactly as the captain had reckoned on when he so cleverly engineered her into becoming his guide to Plas Arawn. Straight back she led them to where they had found her, saying only: "Now the snow has stopped again we should soon see the place."

"And all the ghosts that fill it when its master dies?" queried the captain easily.

"Who told you that child's tale?" demanded the woman, sharply.

"Who doesn't tell that tale—from here to Hereford?" demanded the captain in turn. And Boyle listened harder than ever to this tale of danger of ghosts, adding itself to the dangers of the hills the ostler had descanted on; to the danger of the seven thieves he knew of below, the other seven the woman told of in the house in front, and the storm that might burst upon them again at any moment. He shook his head in the dark as they went, and held the butts of his panacea, his pistols, well to the front. Why had his captain hidden all this from him, and made such a secret of the whole business? It looked bad: very bad. They were better off than this even on last year's Christmas Eve, in the great Retreat to Corunna!

A hundred yards further on the woman turned the horse sharp to the right, but still keeping under the shelter of some cliff, to judge by the fact that they were still sheltered from the wind. A few lengths more and she stopped. "Here's where you'll have to go down if you mean to cross the dingle. But better go round the head of it, I say."

"Ah," began the captain, numbly, for his hurts were stiffening in the cold. Then, while he peered and still peered across where the dingle should be, suddenly he gasped out a furious "Ah! ah!" but in the voice of one whose scalp is freezing with dread, for there, straight there, not a musket shot away, a flame of sudden ghastly light sheeted earth and sky for a moment, throwing up the strong outlines of a great old house of defence, before the flash died into blackness again, save that every loop and window of the building was left gleaming with a flare of blue unearthly light, flashing and flushing with awesome ghostliness.

VI.

THE FIGURE ON THE TOWER.

And while they looked and stared with stiffening flesh, there on the leads, over the porch tower that ran up to the roof, stood the figure of a woman or a girl, whose grey garments took on a cadaverous hue in that blue glare, and whose voice came ringing across the midnight glyn between them with a cadence of such wild de-

spair that Boyle fell back against his startled horse, and broke into a babble of Portuguese oaths, while the captain whispered over and over again to himself just one word. "Aye! aye!" conscious of nothing but the sight before him. Neither the captain nor Boyle heeded the woman's moaning whimper as she clutched the saddle-bow.

Then Boyle's courage came with a rush of desperation, and he snatched out his one refuge, the long horse pistol. "You said there was a ghost, sir. I'll have a shot at it——" and he lifted the piece to fire.

The captain woke and turned to stop him, but it was the woman flinging herself from the saddle with a scream of her own, and, falling full on Boyle's neck, spoiled the shot. Down went Boyle beneath the weight: bang roared the pistol sideways somewhere, and the captain had barely clutched the tangled figures of woman and man in time to save them from rolling down into the depths of the glyn yawning below them. It took him a full minute or more to set them on their feet again. Then all three looked across at the house again. It had vanished. They stared only into a blackness that grew blacker as they stared, for the storm was rising again.

Yet still they stood still and stared, as if they never would move again, till out of the blackness came once more that wild, wild scream of wailing despair, and at that the woman turned upon the men. "Come! Come quick! You must come before the storm gets us. That scream means death if we're not quick!"

"Captain! Captain!" cried Boyle quaveringly. "Don't go, captain! That's a trap! This woman's only luring us there to be murdered. Don't go, captain!"

"Rubbish! Boyle!" retorted the captain, but almost as shakily as Boyle himself. "She told us herself there were seven murderers there. Is that baiting a trap?"

"But they're seven—in a strong house—with plenty of arms and ammunition! We're only two. We've only pistols. You're hurt already. This woman, too, may turn on us there. And there's the ghost and the blue lights."

But the recital caught the captain shivering, and turned him stubborn. "Boyle," he said sharply, "that house is Plas Arawn! There's a connection with Hades in its very name. Plas Arawn we came to find. The place should be mine. I'm going to it and take possession, in spite of all the ghosts and thieves alive! Reload that pistol! We're going there. Better perish in storming that house than perish running away in this storm. Up with that woman on your saddle and march."

That last was an order. Boyle was a soldier. He became stubborn too. He obeyed.

The woman urged the horse desperately forward through the snowdrifts. "It's a race between us and death," she kept on repeating.

Boyle answered her only once, when the captain was too far behind to hear. "My pistol will blow as big a hole in you as in a man! I'm telling you!"

"Hurry!" she said to that. "Hurry! Make haste!"

As they turned the head of the glyn the storm struck them full blast again, but the path from there ran between hedges, till they came so close to the stables they could not see that the first horse all but touched the wall with his nose. There the woman slid from the saddle. "Haste now! We'll go in at the hall-door!"

"Didn't I tell you it was a trap, sir?" said Boyle sullenly.

"Why the front door, madam?" demanded the captain. "Why not break in where the seven are not expecting attack?"

"Because that's the only way in!" returned the woman impatiently. "Because every other door and window is barred and double barred, but I sawed the bar of that door through before I went, and I have the key of the lock here!"

"But the seven will be waiting there for that very reason."

"They'll not! They'll be dead of fright. They say the skeletons from the dungeons get up and dance in that hall when the owner lies dead in it."

retorted the woman. "And there's the grey lady!"

"Go on!" cried the captain.

VII.

THE FIGHT IN THE DARK.

The woman ploughed on through the snow with the captain at her elbow, and Boyle, lagging as far as he dared behind, but pistol ready. The deep snow deadened all sound of their footsteps; the howl of the storm in the great cedars and in the gables drowned any sound of words. "Here!" said the woman at last, halting in the blackness. "I'll put the key in and turn it. You'll push the door open and walk in. Be ready."

The captain's stubbornness flared to recklessness. "Right!" he cried, as if he cared naught who heard. "Boyle! Stand ready!"

Boyle's courage lit at that. "I'm ready, sir. Let's get at 'em!" He almost shouted the words, as if a frenzy were taking him.

The woman was bungling with the great key at the keyhole. "Here, let me!" cried the captain, seizing it from her, and ramming it at the door till he happened to hit the slot. Then, with a vast creak, the bolt shot back, and the door groaned open as the woman turned the handle. In strode the captain into the blackness, Boyle after him.

The woman heard their feet—three lunging cavalry strides—ring out on the oaken floor, and then both men jumped half their height as in from right and left flashed hissing, swishing coils of fire, that curled and snaked along the floor, round them and under their very feet, lighting up the form of a dead man in his shroud and coffin, that stood on end against the farther wall. The captain sprang back to the threshold, and Boyle jumped back till he could set his back to the wall. Then the lights as suddenly swished out, leaving the dead man and his coffin gleaming phosphorescent in the blackness.

Boyle was cursing hoarsely. "Come on! Come on—all of you!" And then the captain got his voice. "Fireworks! Fireworks, of course! Trains of tinted powder! One of them must be an old soldier of the engineer companies! Smell the powder?" For all that his voice was desperately shaky.

"Let's burn the place, captain," shouted Boyle at that, ragingly. "There's where they lit the train!" he went on, pointing through the darkness with his pistol unseen. And, as if to level the pistol were too great a temptation, bang he fired it.

Instantly followed a howl of pain and rage, and the red spurt of an answering pistol shot lit up the room. It missed, but it showed the face and figure of the firer framed in a doorway there. "Come on, Boyle!" yelled the captain, and charged for that doorway.

In the darkness the captain dashed into the doorway just as it was closing in his face; but his full weight drove it open again, and he fell lunging on the floor of a room still dimly lit by the glow of a dying fire. He saw the feet and legs of two or three men there, but by the time he looked up at their faces, Boyle was in and on them like a mad bull, his pistol banging as he entered, and away went the men up some stairs in the corner.

Up jumped the captain and kicked the ends of the faggots together on the hearth. In the light of the following blaze he re-primed his pistols and strode towards the stair. "Wait a minute till I reload, sir," cried Boyle, imploringly.

The captain checked and looked back, just as the woman rushed in after them. She went straight to the table, where the fag ends of a supper were flanked by two extinguished candles in iron sconces. Snatching the candles up she lit them at the fire. "Follow me!" she cried. "I'll show you the way!"

"To where?" demanded the captain sharply.

"To save her," retorted the woman in a fever of impatience. "Come now—if they haven't murdered her already! This way, quick!" and she darted back into the hall.

The captain followed hard after her, but Boyle checked long enough to snatch down one of the ancient swords

that hung upon the wall. Through the hall they went, and up a winding turret stair that opened on that end of it. But as their feet sounded on the first steps they heard the bang of a door above. "They've stopped us—they think," said the woman. "But I'll show them."

Yet still she went on up the stair, till at the next landing they came upon one door that closed a room against them, and another that barred the stair. Without warning to her two companions, the woman drew a full, deep breath, and then burst forth in a great, wild cry of "Yslain! Yslain! I'm coming! I'm coming, Yslain!"

VIII.

THE HIDDEN CHAMBER.

The house seemed to ring with that wild cry, echoing in every corner, electrifying her two supporters. And while the echoes were still ringing in their ears she planted one candle in the captain's left hand, while she pointed to the little rafters close over her head, as she stood before the room door.

"Push up those boards!" she whispered.

The recess in which she stood was no more than four feet by three, and it was ceiled with four rafters with floor-boards laid above them. The captain lifted his hand, and pushed at the boards. Behold, it was a trap-door lifting bodily up. Even the middle rafter lifted with it, and the candle gleam showed a cavernous space above. "Up! Up!" whispered the woman. The captain passed his candle to Boyle, caught hold of the rafters above, and swung up through.

Then Boyle passed him the candle again, and swung up after him. Lastly they haled the woman after them, and then replaced the trap-door floor again, while they stood on the narrow ledge of stone floor that went round it. "Now where?" demanded the captain.

The candles showed them to be in a scanty room no more than eight by four, while from the inner end of it the rudest of stone steps led up somewhere overhead, a rough-hewn hand-rail running with it. "Up now. On up!" said the woman again.

Candle in hand, the captain started, and he had not gone twice his own height before he came to a slightly larger room under the leads, and nearly fell back down the steps as his candle flashed in the face of a girl of a loveliness that startled him, seen in that light and place, and under such circumstances.

"Yslain!" cried the woman softly from below. "Are you there, Yslain?"

"Yes," answered the girl, as softly, but staring straight at the captain's eyes in terror.

Then up came Boyle, and turned and gave a hand to the woman, who followed. "Ah! Ah!" cried both women, as they rushed and clasped each other.

"I saw an awful light, like terrible lightning," answered the girl. "And when I went out on the leads I saw a fire away across the glyn, and I cried out in despair for help."

"But, madam," put in the captain, "how the deuce did the young lady get up here—I mean, why?"

"I sent for her as soon as Morgan Gibbon broke his neck," returned the woman. "And when those gallows rogues turned on me she fled up the stair with me. I got her up through the trap-door, but before I could follow they were too close. I dropped the trap, whipped through the room that's on that landing, and locked myself in another room, the one I had to drop out of the window of because they were breaking in the door. Then I ran for help. I knew they didn't know this hiding-place."

"Ah," returned the captain with a great air. "Well, it is a good hiding-place, but now I think we'd better all go down to the fire in that room and get some supper."

"I am very cold," said the girl to that.

"Then we will go down," decided the woman fiercely. "I'll go first and help you down the steps."

When they reached the ledge of the trap-door below, the woman listened a moment before she cautiously whispered, "Now lift the trap."

Quietly the captain lifted it, and

then the woman claimed his hand to help her down first, and the girl after her. Quietly he helped her down. Quietly he helped the girl after her, Boyle holding one candle the while.

Then, just as the captain laid hold of the rafters to follow, a great din of feet sounded on the turret stair from above, a wild burst of shouts with it, and through it all the woman screamed as she was sent rolling down the stairs; the girl screamed as one rogue seized her by both hands; and the captain roared out a good great mouthful as he dropped down to rescue her.

His roar, as he came, electrified the gang. Boyle's pistol from above electrified them still more; but as those on the upper stairs turned and rushed away up into the blackness, the one who had seized the girl snatched out a pistol and fired it to blow off the captain's head as he dropped. And the captain dropped in a huddled heap, while the one who had fired at him dashed away in the wake of his fellows up the stair.

After him went Boyle with a furious spring from the trap, his sword levelled, and thrusting in wild rage as he leaped, till, at the third thrust, down came the fellow rolling, hamstrung and helpless, roaring out oaths and groans enough for a whole battlefield. The woman jumped to her feet again where she had rolled, and snatched up the candle which had fallen guttering and flickering on the floor. Between the light of that and of the one still on the rafter above she saw the girl on her knees, crying, from sheer excitement, as if her heart would break, while at the same time she was holding the captain's bleeding head in her left arm. Then Boyle stooped to look also, but he was an old campaigner. "No," he said. "He dropped too quick—or the whole top of his head wouldn't be on like it is. It would ha' bin blown clean off."

The woman seemed to think all danger from the men was over, for she stepped into some near room and brought a ewer of water to wash the furrowed and powder-burnt scalp of the captain before Boyle bound it up. Then she left the girl still nursing that head, while she herself helped Boyle with the much more serious task of binding up the hamstrung rascal on the landing outside, who was bleeding too heavily for safety.

IX.

THE SECRET OF THE OLD CHEST.

As she knelt to that, however, a thought took her. She let Boyle begin the bandaging, so that the wounded rogue began to feel a visible relief from his palpable dread of dying out of hand, and then she clapped a grip on Boyle's wrist to stop the work. "No, no," she said. "This villain must answer my questions or lie and die here."

Therein she made her mistake. Boyle had his own feud with her. "Must he—must he?" he retorted. "You seem to be givin' a deal of orders for a camp follower, missus. You tell me what the questions are about, an' I'll tell you if they're important enough. Otherwise he has belligerent rights, an' I bandages him."

The woman tried to ignore him. "You, Tom Gam!" she began to the man. "You broke open the old chest and took the papers out."

"You, Tom Gam," followed Boyle, before the man could speak. "Don't you answer her unless you wants to. In the first place, what papers are they, an' what are they doin' in an old oak chest?" He was very judicial.

The man preferred to answer Boyle. "They're the estate papers, an' after old Morgan Gibbon broke his neck on the stairs, this afternoon, she was goin' to burn 'em."

"Oh," answered Boyle, with exaggerated surprise. "There's two felonies in that one answer. First go off then, how about this neck-breakin'? Who broke who's neck?"

"Nobody. He broke it hisself. Harry Old Soldier had been makin' coloured powder i' the kitchen for Christmas larks, an' we'd had some ale—not drunk, but just nice—an' Morgan Gibbon shouted so long for old Harry to come up that he came down with a horse whip to look for

him. An' before he came to the turn o' the stairs, here was Harry comin' up, an' so Morgan Gibbon leaned over the rail an' slashed at him. An' as the whip struck Harry he caught hold of it to stop gettin' more, an' he pulled an' old Morgan pulled, till he pulled hisself over the rail, head first, an' down he came an' smashed his skull on the floor at the bottom. That's how he broke his neck."

"An' sounds all right, too; serve him right," commented Boyle. "But now, number two; these papers: what about them?"

"You shut up, Tom Gam," stuck in the woman angrily. "Don't you tell our affairs to strangers."

The woman made a wild clutch at Gam's neck, but the judicious Boyle was too quick for her. He shouldered her off the wounded man so stiffly as almost to send her rolling down the stairs again. And as she stared at him, deliberating whether to attack him, he lifted the gory sword and shook it in the candle light to impress her.

"Well," went on Mr. Gam, "when she see old Gibbon dead, she tried to drive us all out o' the house with fear o' being had up for murderers, an' she'll be the chief witness. An' we said things to her till she got madder. An' we had more ale while we laid the dead man out an' made a sort of a coffin. An' then we finds she's sent the two maids out on horses, one to fetch her niece here as owner o' the house an' estate, an' the other to fetch up Long Hopkin and his lot from the tavern at Blaen Clud, to hold the house for her. But we didn't take no notice till we saw her runnin' into the dead man's chamber, with his secret key, to the old oak chest, which she'd been seekin' everywhere an' found at last. Then we knew she was after the papers."

"Oh," said Boyle, a bit mystified. "But what did she want with them?"

"Burn 'em, of course," returned Gam. "Then the dead man's nephew, that's away in Ludlow, wouldn't have no papers to prove his uncle's title, so then he couldn't oust this woman's niece, unless he could drive out Long Hopkin and his nine men from possession. Isn't that the way they all do in Wales,"* he added dogmatically. "We chased her, but she had the room door-keys, an' she kept lockin' doors after her, an' we kept breakin' 'em in after her, till at last we had her cornered in a room with no other door. When we broke that in she'd dropped out o' the window an' gone."

"An' you didn't know o' the niece bein' in the house?" queried Boyle.

"We did, but we couldn't find her."

"An' about these papers?" prompted Boyle.

"We sent one man off to ride to Ludlow to bring the nephew quick. An' then Harry Soldier begun to think it might help to save his neck if he was to make sure o' savin' these papers for the nephew. So we got hammers an' crowbars an' prized the chest open, an' Harry put the chief o' the papers into his old knapsack."

"An' after that?" prompted Boyle again.

"After that we had fireworks to frighten Long Hopkin if he was comin', an' we laid fiery trains along the hall floor, because the oak bar on the door was sawed through, an' the lock locked, an' us no key. That was Harry Soldier's plan. He did all the fireworks."

"Oh, he did, did he?" snorted Boyle fiercely. "Him an' his blasted blue lights an' his ghosts! I'll teach him what the fightin' part o' the Army thinks o' the engineers. Wait till I've finished bandagin' you, an' then?" He fell to finishing the bandaging in great style.

"You did it already," returned Gam. "You hit him through the arm wi' that first shot o' yours i' the hall."

"Ah," said Boyle, judicial again. "I commonly do wing my man. The duels I fought in Portugal over them fine girls there. You should see me," he went on, with a judicious shake of the head. "But now I think I'd best take charge o' these papers myself."

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*More than one estate in Wales can still be pointed out which passed at a death in this way, so late as Georgian days. It was, of course, a survival of an earlier custom.

"You can't. They're gone," returned the man. "As soon as he began to feel a bit dazed, with the pain o' that wound, he reckoned he couldn't trust us to fight stiff enough, so he took the papers an' out he bolted."

"Where to?" began Boyle, but his words were clean drowned by the rage of the woman as she jumped up and slammed the candlestick at the pair of them. "Gone! gone! The papers gone!"

So loud she screamed that the captain stirred in his dazedness. "Boyle! Boyle!" he muttered, "where am I?"

"In the enemy's country, by all I'm hearin'," replied that judicious servant, rising with the candle he had so deftly caught, and moving to re-light it at the other candle overhead.

"Better get to quarters somewhere, then," returned the captain, half conscious only.

"That's just what we'll do," quoth Boyle heartily. "Here, missus—that gang that bolted up the stairs—where can they get to?"

"Only into the turret top: the look-out place. Besides, there isn't a man amongst 'em now. But I'll get those papers yet."

"Blow the papers, an' Gam shall be looked after," said Boyle, "after we've stowed the captain. Now, Miss, if you'll carry a candle after us, and you, missus, if you'll just carry a candle in front, then I'll carry the captain down to that room where the fire an' the supper was."

X.

THE MISSING PAPERS.

The woman seized a candle to obey, still repeating her refrain, "But I'll have those papers yet."

"When the snow melts and we find his body," returned Boyle soothingly, as he stooped and got his shoulder under the captain and lifted him to his very uncertain feet. "Now gi' me that sword," Boyle went on, and with that weapon tucked tightly under his armpit, he started down the stairs.

In five minutes he had settled the captain on the oaken couch by the fire in the room where they first found the candles, and the only thing they noticed as they went was that the front door stood wide open, though the woman had closed it when she first entered. It must have been by that door that Harry the Soldier had bolted.

The last dram in the brandy flask helped the captain's consciousness to clear a little, and Boyle was just beginning to ask about some supper when a great tramping of feet dinned the echoes of the hall, and one great voice roared something which Boyle didn't understand, but which roused the woman to a transport of triumph. "Ho!—here they are at last. Now we're masters here, Yslain. And we'll hunt Harry Soldier down with bloodhounds!"

Away she flew into the hall with fresh candles she had just lighted, and away after went Boyle, sword in hand, to see what was the matter. He almost ran into the long troglodyte from the cavern tavern and all his company, not seven, but nine, as they stood there, half-moon fashion, each with a long black turf-bill in his hand, fit weapon for such giants. "Ho!" said Boyle to himself as he checked, sword ready, and then, "Ah!" he said, for he saw that the troglodytes had a prisoner, a shivering, sobering, snow-patched wretch of a prisoner; none other than the man who had returned his first shot, Harry Soldier.

"He ran plump into us as we came," the leader was explaining to the woman. "We made him tell everything!"

"The papers!—has he got the papers?" demanded the woman fiercely, ignoring all else. "Where are they?"

Before any one could answer her the captain came behind Boyle. Like Boyle, he had a sword in his hand; unlike Boyle, he could scarcely walk, and the girl beside him was really holding him up. Yet his war-accustomed eye detected something at once. The poor prisoner was caked with snow like his captors, but from high up on his left arm that snow was ruddy with blood.

"That prisoner is wounded," spoke the captain sharply. "Bandage him first. Question him after."

"He shall tell us where the papers are first," retorted the woman so furiously that Long Hopkin, the leader, held up a knapsack. "They're here," he said.

"Boyle!" went on the captain dazedly, "take that prisoner to the fire in the next room and dress his wound."

Boyle stepped forward, and the light on his crimson sword blade—it may be—kept them all staring while he took the prisoner by the sound arm and led him back into the room behind.

As soon as he was gone the woman seized the knapsack from Long Hopkin, and clutched out a handful of papers and parchments. "Yes! Yes! Here they are! Now we're masters at last!"

The captain was still leaning on the arm of the girl, and while his wits seemed to rouse at times in starts and flashes, for the more part he hung his head dazedly, or stared vacantly before him. And while the woman stared at the papers the men stared only at him.

The woman stepped to the great old fireplace where only the ashes of a spent fire showed. There she knelt, setting her candle down and beginning to run her eye over the documents in succession, thrusting some into her bosom and crumpling others and throwing them on the hearth, till, as she came to the last one, she lit the pile on the hearth with the candle. "There's the last of Morgan Gibbon!" she cried, standing on her feet in triumph.

The rush of the flames roused the staring captain to something like consciousness again. "Ah! what papers are those burning?" he demanded.

The woman turned on him fiercely. "Every scrap of writing belonging to this estate since old Jenkin Gibbon lay dead in this hall, and his nephew, that dead scoundrel in the coffin there, broke in with a dozen gallows-birds and beat the right heirs out and burnt what papers he would, just as I've done now!"

The captain seemed to be stiffening into strength again as he stared, and the woman went on. "The lads! The heirs—brother's children to Jenkin Gibbon they were—were two fools! They let it go at that, and one went away to the Army, while the eldest stayed here in the hills. And he married my sister in secret and then died, leaving only this daughter—my niece—that's mistress here now."

"This young lady?" demanded the captain, looking round into the face of the girl who held him up.

"That one!" answered the woman with a lifting voice. "That one—for whose sake I've served here as housekeeper for ten long years, and kept a smooth tongue all that time! But it's done! The right heir is back again at last."

Harsh and high came the captain's voice. "That is true! I am the right heir: son of the heir that went to the Army!"

"Aye! I know who you are!" retorted the woman. "I saw your name on those letters. But you did nothing to get the place back all these years, while I was serving to get a chance when the hour should come. So you'll get out and away again while you're safe."

The pain of his wound and all his hurts was gaining again on the captain as he stood, but he made a plain effort to keep fast hold on his faculties till he could answer her. "I see your argument. I could make excuse by telling you that I knew nothing of all this till my father told me of it when he died a year ago, killed on the Retreat to Corunna. But I'm not making excuses. I'm here, and I'm in possession."

"Are you?" screamed the woman, and then she turned to the men. "Half of you away in yonder and tie his man! The rest of you tie this captain!"

Away went more than half of them to ring Boyle round with their long, black turf-bills. In half a minute he was down, and they were binding him.

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XI.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

"Out with him!" cried the woman. "We'll show him who's in possession. Out into the snow with him!"

For all he could do to save himself the captain was done for. For all the danger of rescue the woman could guess at she was victor. But before a hand could be laid on the captain the girl suddenly blazed into fire.

"You shall not!" she cried, looking magnificent as she stepped in front of the captain, facing them over her shoulder. "If he goes, I go too! He was wounded saving me."

"You fool! You little fool!" screamed the woman, ablaze with rage. "After all we've suffered and spent! I'll put him out myself!"

She moved as if to carry out the threat, but at that the girl snatched the naked sword from the dazed captain's hand. "Back!" she cried. "Back!" with such a passion of menace that the woman checked like one petrified: stopped and stared, and stood staring till, with one long gasp of horror, she suddenly collapsed and huddled down on the floor before them all. Then came a great wild wail of "Yslain! Oh, Yslain!" Then the tears in a rush, blindingly.

Till the tears came the girl had stood defying her, but at that she dropped the sword to the floor and flung herself on her knees beside the huddled form there, putting both arms about it and clasping it close to her, as she tried to stop the tears. "Don't! Oh, don't!" she implored. "Nan—Nan! Don't! But he got that wound saving us! But for him we should both be dead! I wanted him to stay till he got well, at least!"

Long Hopkin himself had caught the captain's swaying figure, to support it when the girl let go, only just in time to keep it from slipping to the floor. "That's best," he said now. "He will have to stay here till he is well, at least."

And that is what happened in the end after all, though not how it ended in the end after all. For it took the captain a matter of a full month to get well of his hurts, and in the meantime he had to command the defence of the house against the bold and insidious attempts of the dead man's nephew to regain possession, until at length that nephew, defeated at every turn, called a parley and offered to marry Yslain as the best way of settling things.

But he found he was late. Yslain had already consented to marry the captain, also as a way of settling things. That's how it ended after all.

One minute though—Tom Gam had to limp through life ever after, but he was really bailiff of the estate, and he also settled certain things by marrying—marrying the aunt. As he confided to Boyle over the ale one night: "By Jove, when I saw her come down through the trap I was astonished! Such a pair of legs! I never thought she had 'em! I'm bound to marry her now." And he did.

The Trail to the Painted Rock.

By WILLIAM ATHERTON DU PUY.

I.

THE OLD COOK AT THE RANCH.

FROM Camp Creek to the Hat ranch, a distance of nine miles, the trip must be made over the trail on horseback. Here are encountered the first rugged foothills, a sort of heterogeneous overflow from the huge Rockies above, where desert and mountain meet and the waggon is abandoned and the supplies for the camp are transferred to the backs of pack animals to follow the tortuous trail over the divide.

I was a day ahead of the outfit, and it devolved upon me to pack the long string of horses and mules and take the supplies over this last stage of their journey that all might be in readiness at the ranch when the cowboys arrived and that the round-up might not be delayed.

I was hilarious with joy, for this was the land of my great, good, wild, careless youth, and I was back to it again after four years' absence. I had returned again to my first love of the wide plains and high hills of the west after an enforced course in college which the civilised man in me had driven me to, but the call of the plains had brought me back at the end of that period and I had just arrived.

I had been born to the saddle, was an instinctive handler of horses, and well versed in the eccentricities of the lariat. I tackled the packing of my animals with a zest, and after a few awkward passes with the ropes my hand fell into the knack of throwing the diamond hitch of the army as I had thrown it as a lad, or by preference the squaw hitch favoured of the cowboy because it could be handled more easily by the packer working alone.

When the twelve white, canvas-covered packs had been strapped on as many animals, and the train had wound up the trail and struck out for the ranch, and we had gone into the high hills and were again surrounded by the great solitary wastes, I felt that satisfaction of a complete at-homeness with my surroundings that I had not known for several years. The element of novelty was strong on the journey, for, although I had known all phases of Western life in my earlier experiences, I had never been over this trail before. I was trusting the steering of our whole course to the old bell mare, and a more infallible guide could not have been found on all the frontier, but occasionally some coltish one would get ahead of the old mother, and I feared they would lead her wrong or in their gyrations pull a pack off against an overhanging bough.

So the element of uncertainty hung over the outcome of the journey, until at sundown the bell mare reached the crest of the last rough ridge, paused for a moment with ears cocked knowingly ahead, nickered loud and long, and hurried down the hill. When, bringing up the rear behind Toby, the mule, I reached the point of vantage, the ranch was before me.

For half a mile the trail wound zigzag down the steep hillside. To the left lay the chaos of foothills extending without system for twenty miles, and verging into the grey desert beyond, over which one seemed to look into infinity. To the right rose Horse Mountain, rugged and precipitous, while beyond extended the chain of the Bradshaws, fir crowned and massive. At the foot of the trail, the one mark of civilisation in all the waste, snugly nestled the ranch.

About a four-acre plot of alfalfa like a patch of green velvet on the corduroy of the landscape extended a fence partly of poles and in part of barbed wire, at the corner of which the

stockade corral showed distinct. Near by stood the cabin of logs, and from its stone chimney curled that unmistakable sign of habitation—the smoke wreath. The waters of Cave Creek flowed ribbon-like among the sycamores.

Uncle Peter, the old cook at the ranch, stood in the doorway and watched the approach of the cavalcade, and I could detect the flow of his conversation before getting within earshot.

"I have been expecting the outfit since the last rain put water in all the canyons," he began. "Is Osborn at Camp Creek? Who is to come with the vaqueros this year? Old Sadie has a colt with two white hind feet, but the mountain lions came near getting it, as the gashes on its loin and the neck of the mother testify. Is Profeto, the Mexican, coming, and do you like canned tomato pies, for I have some ready cooked? They tell me that Kentuck has sold his ranch and that the new owner, Captain Kindall, is coming up for a month's stay. Bill Simpson, who came over from Tonto Basin last summer, said that he had the prettiest girl in Arizona, and that she was coming out from the east this spring. They call her Dolores."

So he ran on voluminously, asking a thousand questions, but giving me scant chance to reply before something else suggested itself. The outpouring at first confused me, but I soon realised that it was but the pent-up overflow of six months' silence, as Uncle Peter had seen no man for that length of time.

His desire to talk and a conflicting desire to be informed played strange freaks with the old man, as I found when the packs had been disposed of and we stretched ourselves comfortably in front of the cabin. I answered his questions briefly, and gave him free opportunity for the relief he sought, as with the pressure of full steam of accumulated conversation he ran on endlessly and I studied him meantime.

Seventy years of age he seemed, and never a man of great bulk. Now he was bent and emaciated, and his form showed weak and thin beneath the rough miner's clothes. A shaggy and unkempt beard and untrimmed hair somewhat hid the thinness of his face, but the arched bridge of his nose showed clear-cut beneath a high and narrow forehead, and mild blue eyes, with still some fire of spirit, looked undimmed into mine.

For fifteen years he had cared for the ranch through the seasons of inactivity, and had cooked for the boys when rodeo time was on. I had also heard of his tireless trampings of the hills from Osborn and of his strange actions when on several occasions around the mess table the boys had talked of the lost Peg Leg mine and its fabulous richness, but other than this he was merely an old prospector, worn out and living here for lack of other home. But after that night he was my friend.

II.

THE TAMING OF THE "MANEATER."

Early morning two days later found everything in readiness for the first day's drive in gathering the cattle. Osborn, the owner, Henry James, his foreman, Profeto, the Mexican, and all the dare-devil young crew who went to make up the personnel of the force of cowboys had arrived with their horses. The day had been spent in resetting loosened shoes, washing saddle blankets, greasing lariats, and finally in the distribution of horses, each man getting his allotment of four, to be ridden by him alternately during the days of trying work that were to follow.

To my lot in the assortment of the horses had fallen a great, roman-nosed, stocken-legged sorrel that looked to me the pick of all the horses in the outfit, but I learned later that I had been given him for a purpose, for the foreman and the cowboys, judging from my appearance, held the opinion that I was a tenderfoot, and Osborn, in the short association of the day before, had told none of them of my past record and exploits. As the tenderfoot I was to be made the victim of the usual rough jokes of the

round-up, and was as an initiation to be given a couple of hard falls.

The stocken-legged horse was generally known to be difficult to manage and sure to buck. He had been recently bought in a lot of horses coming from an adjoining ranch, and no one else was aware of the fact. James knew that he had thrown three men at the tournament in Tonto Basin the year before, for he was one of those men. The horse had been given up as incorrigible, but James, a rough, headstrong, but efficient man, had purposely given him to me and had tipped the boys to watch the fun.

I had saddled him that first morning and he had stood sullen and unresisting. I had pulled the blinds over his eyes, but it hardly seemed necessary, as he did not flinch from the saddle, and the "kink" in his back, which always indicates the Mexican horse's intention to buck, was hardly perceptible. I noticed that the cowboys had shifted their positions and seemed desultory in their work as I got the big horse ready for mounting, but my danger never occurred to me, and I was ready to get on him when Uncle Peter came to me with a pair of spurs in his hand, as a subterfuge, about which he asked me some idle question, and then spoke in an undertone, inaudible to the others.

"Take him to the rock pile," he said. "That is 'Maneater,' the renegade from Tonto Basin."

I grasped the situation in a moment. This was the most powerful and the worst-spoilt horse in the territory, and had a record for throwing the most hardened and skilful riders on the range. I was to be given a fall for the sport of the others. I determined that I should win out.

I tightened my haquima, that nose-piece of the Mexican, and best of all arrangements for guiding a young horse, until it bit cruelly into the under jaw of the sullen horse. Then I seized it and shook his head in a rudely awakening manner and held it firm. Walking directly in front of him I seized him firmly by the nose and slapped him full in the forehead with my open hand, first lightly and finally with all my might. He was thoroughly awakened, and his sullenness somewhat abated. He thought of other things.

A horse recognises the firm hand and determined will as quickly as does a man, and as quickly detects a tremor of weakness. If these western horses can but be gotten past the first desire for a battle and warmed to the saddle the trouble is past. I laid a firm hand on the Maneater, but knew that his case was so confirmed that I would need outside aid in conquering him.

I led him out into the open, and close to the rock pile, which was simply a long stretch of round cobble stones piled here by some freshet. Thrown into these a vicious horse is greatly handicapped, because of the fact that he can get no secure foothold from which to throw himself into the air, and further by the fact that when he descends he alights on the round and rolling stones, and is likely to break his ankles and knees. He may fall and carry his rider down with him, but he is less able to throw the rider.

By the side of the rock pile I mounted the sullen horse. He stood doggedly until I was well seated in the saddle, and gave no response when I tugged on the reins. I raised my heavy quirt high for a vicious stroke of his shoulder and at the same time prepared to clench him with the spurs. As the stroke descended a feminine voice, as clear as a bell, rang out:

"Stop, young man. The 'Maneater,' the 'Maneater.' Leap for it."

As the stroke hand descended my eyes raised to the trail that led down the creek and looked squarely into the coal black ones as into a well of leaping flame, as a slim, dark girl, willowy as a wind-blown bough, drew up her roan pony at the corral fence. I knew it was Dolores Kindall.

Even in that brief moment every detail of the girl's appearance was etched into my memory. Like a native Indian she rode, lithe and supple, her slender form rounded with the first full plumpness of womanhood. Hair as black as night ran wild about clear-cut features, and beneath her darkish skin surged the red, warm blood of health and spirit.

But despite her admonition, the blow descended, and with a bellow of rage

the great horse struck flame from the rocks and went high into the air. I was at the haquima with all my strength, and when he descended it was in the midst of a rock pile, and his feet slipped and turned, and he went to his knees. Scrambling up, he went again into the air, and, descending, again punished himself. So mad and without regard of consequences was the spoilt horse that I feared he would break his legs, and expected every moment that he would go down upon me.

He punished himself cruelly, and even under the disadvantage gave me all I wanted to ride him until he had fought out the mad battle. I whipped him and circled him on the stones until he had given it up, and yielded to the reins and acknowledged himself beaten. Then I rode him to the fence where the dark girl waited excitedly, and raised my hat in a most gracious bow.

"I apologise to you," I said, "and to this good horse, for the unfair advantage I was forced to take in the affray, but I realised myself overmatched. The 'Maneater,' with a few more conquests, would have been untamable, and now I have him."

"You have succeeded most beautifully," she said, a glow of approval that I could not help feeling in her eyes. "But can you hold the mastery? I witnessed his performances of last summer, and he is a veritable demon."

"Were our destinies as harnessable as horses," I ventured, "and did our success with the brutes augur well in other battles, I would be more sanguine of the future."

"He who masters the spirit of a vicious horse," she replied, "may command the respect of all mankind, and will have his way in affairs of the heart."

"I will tame the 'Maneater,'" I was declaring, and might have run on into wild speeches under the influence of the witchery of her beauty and genialness of manner had not James at that time approached, and to my surprise she greeted him as an old acquaintance.

"It is a coincidence, is it not," she asked him, "that you and I and the 'Maneater' should come together again in this way. I wore your colours, you know, when we three met at Tonto. This time the horse has had worse luck."

"He hasn't had a chance to do much for himself in the first scrimmage," said the foreman, with a scowl that showed his displeasure, and with an evident ignoring of my presence. "You have come over to the Kentuck Ranch, I hear. How is the Captain?"

"We are at the ranch for a month, and father is delighted," her remarks were addressed as much to me as to the foreman. "I must come over and get acquainted with my neighbours. Is this old man the queer old prospector, Uncle Peter, of whom I have heard so much? Please let me meet him?"

I called to the old man, and as he came over he surprised me by the courtly manner of his approach, and when, after the introduction, I remarked that Miss Kindall might develop a taste for tomato pies under his guidance so ordinary a pleasantry seemed out of place.

When the girl smiled upon him, and warmly extended her hand, I noted the start of remembering surprise upon his brow, and he passed his hand over his forehead as though to brush away the cobwebs of confusion.

"Your smile, child," he said, taking her hand, "plays freaks with the old man's mind, which seldom sees other than the smiles of memory, but so she smiled, and that is nigh on to forty years ago."

"Then let me smile her smiles over again for you while you dream they are the same." She spoke impulsively, and I knew as I saw them together that she had a great heart that would take the old man into it, and that they would be friends.

III.

DOLORES KINDALL AND HER FATHER.

Returning to camp at sunset some days later from a long ride to the extreme edge of the range, I found

Dolores Kindall on the crest of the canyon from which I had first looked down upon the panorama of the ranch, the foothills and the desert and to the mountains above. The setting sun threw iridescent rainbow rays into the valley below, with here and there a dash of brilliancy to the rugged projections of the Bradshaws beyond that but intensified the cool depths of the wooded canyons and the lengthening shade creeping over the plain.

The girl sat erect and statuesque, silhouetted against the sunset sky, silent, immovable. A suggestion of an early painting of some lone Indian that I had seen so was strong, but upon my approach she turned, and the likeness was chiefly lost.

"You gave my picture just the touch of life it needed," I said, "to make it perfect. Were you enjoying yours?"

"You have saved my life by arousing me from it, Mr. De Treville," she replied gaily. "I have been dreaming over it for an hour, and was so transfixed that I might have stayed right here and starved to death, for see how late it has grown and the ranch is ten miles away."

"Not by the burro trail," I said. "That cuts off half the distance, and I might show it to you if you asked me."

"And you shall dine with us and meet my father. Uncle Peter has been telling me many things of you, and my father has some of your charts of that little-known country that you made for the Government. He has done something also in opening up the new country, for it was really the land of the Indian when he first came. You will be great friends."

"Have you and our old cook made friends so soon?"

"Just great friends," she replied. "We liked each other from the start, and I have been over to the camp and talked for hours with him when you were all away after the cattle. Do you know anything of his past life?"

"Nothing whatever."

"He and I get along so famously," she confided. "He seems to take me right into his confidence, and I am sure he tells me things of which he has not spoken for years to any one else. And I feel so drawn to him."

"He is no ordinary prospector. He has told me of an early life of refinement and has talked of love and romance and of an artistic youth spent in an atmosphere of studios, and finally of her—his young wife.

"I know there is a tragedy in it, for he never finishes the story. It must be cruel—too horrible to discuss. But this he tells me. She was young and fair and slight, and she was loved by another, a man of influence, whom it was decreed by her parents she should wed. Then when the planned event approached they had run away to America. Here they had lived happily for awhile until the vengeance of the other man found them.

"On the night they had left Paris in some wild prank a carousing body of American students had brought upon themselves the avenging eye of the law. The old rival had saddled the blame upon the disappearing student, and under grave charges had set the bloodhounds of the French Government upon his track. He had been warned, and they had fled to the wilds of the West and there found safety. Further than this Uncle Peter will not go."

"When he talks of her to me," said Dolores, and a feeling of awe seemed to enter her words, "he will look at me so searchingly and say, 'And eyes and a smile like yours, my dear,' and at times I fancy he almost believes I am she, although she was small and with masses of golden hair."

"A strange old man," I mused. "I always felt there was a story in his life, but how must it have ended? His long search for the lost Peg Leg mine of which the cowboys tell such strange tales may have some connection. There is but one person in all the hill country in whom I am more interested than in Uncle Peter, and of whom I would more like to hear many things. That person is a certain charming, beautiful, black-haired girl——"

"I'll bet you are a Mr. Flatterer and mean me," she interrupted. "But how can a shy lady from the rancho expect to be of interest to a venturesome spirit that finds companionship only in the great mountain solitudes

and diversion in battles with the fierce things that live there."

"The lesser homage might give way if a more worthy goddess were found."

"And have no sirens sung during the years of study in the East?"

"It certainly has not been so," I assured her, and tried blunderingly to explain that I had held myself apart from the other sex and that my life had been strangely without woman acquaintances. I had, in fact, surprised myself by the rapid development of my acquaintance with Dolores Kindall, for to me it was a thing new and strange. I had always stammered and hung my head in the company of the few girls I had met, and seemed to hold nothing in common with them. The ease with which I found myself gossiping with this fair, companionable, breezy girl came to me as a revelation.

By this time we had reached the ranch of Captain Kindall, and found that burly and hearty ex-army officer at the gate awaiting his daughter's return. I was introduced as the tamer of the "Maneater," and the horse was shown as evidence, and his conduct was indeed exemplary. The Captain made me entirely at home, and after dinner we talked long, he telling many tales of early fights with the Indians, and of his later retirement from the army and purchase of a large ranch property, which he had gradually extended by acquiring adjoining ranches, until he controlled a stretch of country as big as a New England State.

"The 'Indian' will always welcome you when you can come over," he assured me as I was taking my departure. This term, I had discovered earlier in the evening, he applied affectionately to Dolores, and I thought of its fitness, and she seemed to like the name.

As I left Dolores I told her of a plan the cowboys had formed of smoking a grizzly out of a den that had been discovered high up on Horse Mountain. The trip was to be made two nights later, and I asked her if she would join us and see the sport.

"I have arranged to go already," she told me. "Mr. James has asked me to go with him, and I have promised. But you will be there, and I may see you. I want to."

This last she threw in impulsively as we shook hands, and she sent me away somewhat compensated for the fact that the foreman was to accompany her on the bear hunt.

As I wound my way back to the camp, the "Maneater" plunged through thicket and over stones with a reckless disregard, and I gave him his head. I realised that I was filled with a peculiar exultation which I had never known before, and that the willowy, dark girl was responsible for it. I realised that for me it was treading on dangerous ground, for I had no right to aspire to this charming heiress. I was penniless. I had acquired a profession, but no sooner had I gotten it than I had broken away and come again back to the wild life. I realised that were I to be so bold as to offer suit the bluff old ranchman, her father, would have none of me. But I might dream, and never say anything.

IV.

THE SECRET OF THE PAINTED ROCK.

On the day which preceded the bear hunt a short drive had been purposely arranged, and we had returned and were seated for supper about the mess table long before sundown. It had been like the other days, full of hard riding, with nothing to eat between breakfast and supper, and the outdoor work and mountain air are breeders of appetite. The fierce hunger around the mess table was like a return to the primeval man gnawing his hunk of flesh, but just raised above it by the mental knowledge of the existence of plenty.

The old cook had seemed more preoccupied than usual of late, and paid but little attention to the upbraiding of the cowboys. Ordinarily, he parried their jests, and when the good-natured bandyings went too far, was quick to resent it. On this occasion only James was able to arouse his customary spirit.

The venom of the spleen of Henry

James showed a tendency to vent itself upon Uncle Peter around the camp fire no less than it did upon me in the work in the corral or upon the range. It made no difference to me, because my connection with the work was through Osborn, and James was in no respect over me, but when it was brought to bear on the old man because of the fact that he had warned me of the viciousness of the "Man-eater," the matter assumed another aspect.

Uncle Peter had been the object of many jests among the cowboys, however, and he took them in the spirit in which they were meant. But James knew of his weakness regarding the lost Peg Leg mine, and, playing upon this, was able to torment the old man beyond measure.

"Found the Peg Leg yet?" he asked Uncle Peter, as supper was served.

"I'll find it sooner than you find wits," the old man retorted hotly, but a troubled and anxious look came into his eyes nevertheless, and I noticed the trembling of his hand as he helped me to the stew.

"Mind sort of running that way to-night, isn't it, cook?" James queried so pointedly as to demand an answer.

"You dog of a common cow-puncher," he cried out, "I'll find it yet in spite of you. Somebody has stolen the secret, but I will find it. I will find it."

The old man fairly raved about, his balance of mind being evidently upset by his long search and the teasing of his tormentor. He peeped about under things as though in search of something tangible hidden about the camp.

"Ah! I have it," cried James, and grabbed at the empty air and made pretence of secreting something about his person. The old man would have rushed feebly upon him but I stopped him in his course and said in quieting tones:—

"Never mind, I will attend to it, Uncle Peter," and without warning or further provocation I reached around my next-door neighbour, Profeto, the Mexican, and struck James full in the face with my open hand.

I had intended no such action, but the baiting of the old man had thrown me into one of those fits of uncontrollable rage that had caused me so much trouble in my youthful days, but from which I had flattered myself well cured by sore experience.

Osborn leaped in to prevent any rash act, that might have resulted seriously, and said that we must settle the difficulty fairly with the stockade corral as a ring and with our fists. Osborn knew something of my training with the gloves, and as a consequence did not share in the feeling of sympathy extended to me by the other boys because of the superior bulk and strength of the foreman.

In the fight that followed James was like a mad bull and as strong and as hard to make acknowledge defeat. I started the fight with a quick over-blow between the eyes which is always sure to land, but has no other effect than the moral advantage of first blood, and of precipitating rash acts on the part of an unskilled adversary. Then as he rushed me I landed hard on his wind as a weakener. The rest of the fight was merely a test of endurance and the amount of punishment a great, rugged man would stand. It was the same fight that I had put up many times when some hulking fellow from the farm had come to college and had refused to put on the gloves, as a part of his initiation, with men of his size, but had consented to battle with me when I stood, slim and with a hollow-chested pose, as a decoy to be selected. I was the most skilled boxer in my class, and this was a manner of disciplining a new-comer if he showed the wrong spirit by choosing an undersized man.

When James's face had been badly cut up and he was thoroughly exhausted, I landed hard just over his heart and he dropped his hands limply and was down and out. Osborn called time, and the boys congratulated me, wondering at my skill.

Half an hour later, when the party was ready to depart for the bear hunt, James mounted and rode off in another direction. In this way I found myself able to join Dolores, whom we found waiting on the roan pony at the gate of the Kentuck ranch.

I explained to her that James could not come because of other duties, and she consented to accompany us under my care.

The bear hunt proved to be anything but a success for the parties engaged in it, but to me it was the greatest I had ever attended. As the guardian of the lady guest I had scrambled with her up a high rock that overlooked the bear's den, and from that point of vantage we had watched the preparations of the hunters, who first built a large bonfire on a ledge of rock and later burnt sulphur in the den. But either the bear was away from home or he refused to come out, and met death from the fumes. At any rate, the party returned to camp empty handed.

While the work was in progress, Dolores and I sat high upon our rock and watched the scene. We felt the influence of the prospect of the momentary appearance of the grizzly. We looked out across the desert and tried to make out the scattered lights in the valley settlements beyond, forty miles away. We talked of generalities, and finally of her father, which led to personalities, and I asked her why it was that he called her "The Indian."

"That is a little story of the romance of my father's life," she said, "and there is something of a mystery in it that affects me and has never been explained. I feel like telling you of it. I think you will be appreciative and understand. Shall I?"

"There is nothing I would rather hear," I answered, "and I shall assuredly appreciate the confidence."

"You see," she began, "my father came to the territory thirty or more years ago, and at that time there were fewer white men and more Indians, and oftener trouble between the two races. It was over at Reno Gap that the Indians were finally surrounded and almost exterminated. Here my father had pursued a stalwart warrior with regal head adornments into a remote corner of the camp near the end, and found himself isolated from the other soldiers, and matched man to man with the stalwart savage. They fought a peculiar duel with sword and tomahawk respectively, until at last my father had killed the chief.

"In the wickiup he found a dead white woman in Indian garb, and by her side a slip of a girl more Anglo-Saxon than Indian. My father took charge of the child, and brought her to the fort. Later he sent her to an Eastern convent, and when she returned, a young woman, showing little of her Indian origin, he loved and married her. She was my mother.

"She was never able to tell anything of her early life or of her mother and at the time of her coming into my father's care she spoke but a single sentence in English. That one sentence was the only clue to her origin ever gotten, and its enigma has never been solved."

"And the sentence?" I asked, in breathless interest.

"'In the face of the cliff that overhangs the Painted Rock the secret lies,' the child would repeat, as one drilled to its lesson, but knowing not its meaning," she explained. "The application of those words is still a mystery, but they were so impressed upon the mind of my mother that she repeated them when she was a grown woman, in the same tone as when she was first found, a strange, wild, little thing."

"Have you no theories as to their origin?"

"We have none whatever, but you see I have some claim upon my father's name for me. But I refuse to talk any more of myself, and demand in return a full and detailed account of the life and doings of Mr. Leon De Treville."

"I wish there was a story to it," I said. "But there has been little to it besides the life here and the desire from the beginning to experience all the phases of life that are offered in the new country. I can just remember the time when in New Orleans the plague carried off my mother and father, and of being alone in the great old family house. They were the last of the De Trevilles, and I was placed in a Catholic school. I ran away from this place, for the lack of a little love and sympathy, I think, but maybe because of the old adventurous blood of my ancestors, and since that time have

been mostly here in the open. I wish there was more. In some way I wish it more now than ever before."

"Perhaps there is enough." She said it softly, and I felt that there was an instinctive drawing together between us, and a great something welled up within me, and I knew that body and soul I belonged to this dark girl, and that in her lay my life's chance of happiness, and that in my love for her lay the power that might make me the man that might in time deserve her. With an effort that called forth all my power I restrained myself from telling her of it, and to wait until I had proven myself worthy.

When I dared again look at her she was regarding me seriously in the light that came up from the bonfire below, and there were two great, silent tears in her eyes, and she smiled through them at me, and I knew that she had in her impulsive sympathy read my very thought, and had approved of it. Whatever else might have happened on the rocky point was prevented by the calling of the cowboys that the hunt was given up, and we scrambled down and returned to the ranch.

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V.

THE PEG LEG MINE.

In the time that intervened before the round-up was completed I saw much of Dolores Kindall. We would often in the evening climb to a hilltop and watch the moon push up through the bracken to the east, or would sit in some solitude and listen to the night sounds of the wild, saying nothing. By instinct and, I took it, partly because of the Indian blood coursing in her veins, Dolores respected silence, and though most likely conversational at times, would as soon break in upon the solemnity of a cathedral Mass as upon the soul's communing with itself in solitude.

She liked to match her healthful young strength against mine in long tramps over the hills, and in these contests made me look well to my laurels, and mocked me by solicitude as to my supposed weariness.

We came to look frankly into one another's eyes, I making no attempt to veil the love I felt, and she meeting it frankly, her great, expressive eyes aglow, and running all the gamut, as I fancied, from quick responsiveness and loving sympathy to veiled embarrassment and mocking mischief.

So matters stood between us after the herd of cattle that had been gathered in the rodeo and was to be fattened in the valley below, guided by the attendant cowboys, had disappeared into the canyon, and there was again quiet in the foothills. I alone of the outfit stayed behind to hunt awhile on the Bradshews, and also, probably, because Captain Kindall and his daughter had remained to make elaborate plans for the betterment of their newly-acquired property.

For days before the cowboys had left, Uncle Peter had shown a restlessness, and I had caught him late at night looking away up the canyon with a hungry longing in his eyes. Therefore, when at noon on the day following the breaking-up of the camp I found Uncle Peter gone, and was forced to prepare my own meal, I knew he was off once more in his search of the long-lost Peg Leg mine.

As evening came on, with Dolores I rode far up the creek, and turning into the bed of a branch stream that pierced well into the body of the great Horse Mountain, we rode leisurely for hours in the shallow waters that flowed down its sandy bottom, now between precipitous cliffs that rose like fortress walls thousands of feet above us, and now where its spreading sides offered soil for the sparse cedar and the fir of the greater altitudes which were beginning to appear.

Some miles further on the stream seemed to have cut its way into the very bowels of the mountain, and eternal shade reigned where the swift waters washed in frothing rapids down the steep canyon bed. Suddenly the great gorge led squarely into a huge, white, spar-like pillar of stone that seemed to stand sentinel-like at the verging of the waters, for here the stream broke into three tributary

brooks that fell in cascades or rushed pell-mell to the point of union from varying directions. Above the sentinel rock towered as a wall of solid masonry a cliff that raised its head into the sunlight above and looked off to the southward distinguishable as a landmark to the cowboys of the foothills and the adventurers upon the arid desert for scores of miles.

As, with Dolores following me, I approached the sentinel rock, at which our journey on horseback must end, so precipitous had grown the way, and before I had noted anything unusual in the pillar, the girl rushed hastily past me.

"The Painted Rock!" she exclaimed, "the old Indian place of worship."

She leaped from her pony, and was soon absorbed in a study of the hieroglyphics that appeared upon the stone, but touched them with awe.

From the base of the pillar to far above our heads its surface was etched with those peculiar Indian writings wherein a horse bearing a fleeting warrior, a bird in flight, or an archer with a bent bow is made to convey to the generations that follow some tribal legend or tale of distinguished feats of valour.

"If we could but read them," said Dolores. "I feel that I almost have the secret key, and if the white man knew he would better understand the Indian, his loves, desires, the veneration in which he holds his tribe's traditions and the humiliation of his proud spirit in his subjugation. The red man's heart is broken."

This dark, slim girl standing beneath the Painted Rock and showing so plainly the trace of Indian blood seemed to be instinctively his petitioner and to understand his cause and to plead for it.

"Some day," she said, "I will induce some great, strong man to go among them, to understand them, and for my sake to love them and make the great, white father know his wrongs and how to understandingly correct them. The Indian desires other things than the white man's education offered him at the agencies."

VI.

UNCLE PETER'S STORY.

As she spoke we were startled by the rattling of pebbles that rolled from the hillside opposite, and looking for the origin of their unloosing, perceived Uncle Peter toilsomely making his way into the canyon. As he drew nearer I called to him, but he paid no heed, and, noting his laborious descent, I scrambled up the hillside barely in time to support his tottering steps as he fell in complete exhaustion.

I carried the exhausted and emaciated form of the old man to the base of the rock, and was surprised to note the lightness of the weight I bore. Dolores bathed his forehead in the cool waters of the stream and called to him reassuringly. He aroused, startled, at the sound of her voice.

"Not yet," he half sobbed, "not yet, for I grow so weak. The trail has so often led to the Painted Rock and there been lost. And I grow so weak. Partner, if you had but finished your directions; but death came and the savage."

So exhausted and unnerved was the old man that he ran on incoherently, but always talking, as we understood, of the lost mine of the old wooden-legged prospector for which he had so long searched that it had somewhat upset his mind.

"Never mind, Uncle Peter," Dolores said gently, "let Leon and me search while you rest."

"I dream," he said, passing his hand over his brow in the old way. "Is it Elsie's voice? Elsie, the fair-haired, and oh! what she came to through me!"

With a strong effort he aroused himself. "No," he said, "it is not Elsie, but Dolores, and it is only a dream that makes me believe that her black eyes are blue and the joyous voice is Elsie's.

"My children," he said wearily, "it has been more than forty years that the old man has had his story burning at his heart, and not once has he spoken of it to any living creature. It has hidden there and eaten my heart away," and he placed his hand sadly

on his hollowed chest. Abruptly, and with gasping breath, the old man began his story.

"It was all my fault—the coming to the wilds," he said. "If I had had courage to meet a charge falsely made against me it would have been different, but I fled, and took with me Elsie. Then we came to the country where safety lay only in the forts in those days, but where the solitary prospector went forth with his life held lightly, staking it against the chance of winning the yellow gold of the hills.

"Such a one was Peg Leg, my partner. Already had he lost a limb for his prospects in these mountains through a poisoned arrow and a lack of surgical attention. Still he would venture out. I grub-staked him for six months, and he searched while I at times ventured in other directions. Then one day he came to the fort with a little bag of ore. We worked it out in our rude way, and got half its weight in gold. Our mine was found.

"We worked in silence, but passionately. He would go to the claim, take out only as much ore as a man could carry on his back, and bring it to the foothills, where I would meet him, and convey the precious burden to market. We worked like fiends, and our fortunes grew rapidly. Then came my second weakness and great wrong to Elsie. For six months we had worked so and I had not taken time in my frenzy to see my child-wife in the fort. Then when I visited her she pleaded to accompany me and remain for a while in the camp.

"All this time we had seen no Indian, and had grown to fear the red man the less accordingly. I consented to her coming for a week because I loved her, yet selfishly, weakly, I confess.

"Then the end came." His voice sank low in the horror of his mind's picture as he looked with anguish into the past. "I had returned from delivering a bag of my precious burden, and as I approached a carrion buzzard arose from my tent pole and soared away. I hastened in instant fear to the tent. Across its portal, from which Elsie had waved me a farewell, stretched the stiff form of the prospector. In that moment of intense anguish I remember the idle thought in my mind of the splintered weariness in the appearance of the wooden limb as it stubbornly protruded itself.

"I rushed past him into the tent. All was desolation. The camp had been plundered and Elsie had disappeared. No trace was left of the fair young wife who had followed me into the wilderness, sacrificing all else in life for me and to be thus in turn herself sacrificed.

"In the prospector's hand I found a scribbled note, but at the time I little regarded it, as it told me not of Elsie.

"Then began my long and fruitless search," and he wiped his brow weakly, wearily. "For twenty years I tramped the wilds in search of my wife. Where Indian pitched his tepee there was I prone to wander. In all the camps of all the tribes for hundreds of miles I sought her. Living among the Indians and kissing the hand that smote me, I endeavoured by cunning to find her, but never a trace did I get. Then to me one night in among the desert Indians that inhabit the southern plains about the mission of San Xavier she came, dreamlike, but nevertheless in reality, and bade me give up the search, so I knew she was dead."

The old man's head sunk deep upon his chest in silence, and the grey rock against which he rested was less ghastly in shade than his features. Shrunken and pitifully weak he looked, and life in his exhausted frame was shown only by his feeble breathing.

"Then I remembered the note of Peg Leg, my old partner," he said, arousing himself. "With nothing else to live for, the wealth of the old mine weighed upon me, and I returned to these hills, and we now sit at the end of the trail that leads to that mine, as described in the note of the dying prospector."

He took from an old wallet that he carried in an inner breast pocket a faded scrap of paper upon which we were barely able to trace a few scrawled words:—

"I am dying, Peter," he had written. "Follow Cave Creek to where a branch joins coming direct from Horse Mountain. Turn here, follow-

ing to the Painted Rock. In the face——"

Here the hand that held the pencil had faltered and written no more.

Uttering a startled cry, Dolores sprang to her feet, and with a great light of understanding coming into her face, repeated as a child who had learned an early lesson :—

"In the face of the cliff that overhangs the Painted Rock the secret lies," and she pointed as a seer to the great rock front above us.

In an instant the truth broke in upon me and I knew the meaning of the sentence her mother had babbled as a child and why it had been taught her. With her arms about the old man Dolores hastened in a flood of words to explain it to him.

When she had told of the finding of her mother in the Indian camp and of the phrase that had been taught her, she exclaimed, "Don't you see, Uncle Peter, that these were the words of the Indian's captive taught to her child, my mother, and must have been the words of the prospector, when dying, given to her as a sacred charge to you! How sacredly she guarded that charge! And the captive was your Elsie and my grandmother."

She fondly put her arms about the old man and lovingly smoothed the tangled locks from his brow and with them the furrows of care. A smile of serene happiness came over his face, and he said softly, "My Elsie has come back to me, the same smile and laughing eyes in this, her little granddaughter. But Heaven has given her a stronger, braver man than I, and," turning to me, "care for her, Leon, better than I for my Elsie," he said, putting her hands into mine, and we looked into each other's eyes, standing there under the cliff that held the Peg Leg mine, and were betrothed.

Mr. Marston's Chauffeurette.

By ELLIS PARKER BUTLER.

THERE is this difference between a balloon and an aeroplane: a balloon goes up in the air and the bag breaks; an aeroplane has no bag, so something else breaks instead. When aeroplanes were first talked of, many people considered them impracticable, because they had no gas-bags to break; but, by giving the subject great attention, the inventors soon created a large number of aeroplane parts that would not only break, but break much more easily than a gas-bag. From that day the aeroplane was an assured fact, and Mr. Marston began to take an interest in them.

We are not living in this twentieth century for nothing, I hope! If we do not make use of its marvels, we might as well be living in the Middle Ages. Telephone, telegraph, typewriter, adding machine, bicycle, automobile, aeroplane—if we do not use them they might as well not exist, so far as we are concerned, and we might as well be cave dwellers. That is what Mr. Marston thought.

As soon as the typewriter was perfected Mr. Marston had one, and after several years of patient labour he was able to write on it, with his two forefingers, with one-tenth the speed he could reach with a pen. It is true he never attained great perfection with two fingers. When he really went at it in a businesslike way he used only the forefinger of the right hand, and even then produced something like:

/HeshAds OF ni &hT werE fa ! liNgFa sT)
WH en tHRoughan aLpinE VilAge PpasT♯

but he was able to say, and truthfully, that for him the typewriter existed. He had one, and he used it.

The bicycle no sooner appeared than Mr. Marston began falling off one. He fell off all varieties with the same unvarying success. He began with the old-style fifty-two-inch-wheel bicycle, with the little wheel behind, and immediately acquired a knowledge of every possible way to fall off—sideways, over the handle-bars (what a few men have done), backwards. But he was best at falling forward over the handle-bars. He could do that nine times out of ten. Mr. Marston was one of the gladdest men that saw the invention of the "safety," with the big wheel behind, and the small, pie-plate size wheel in front. It gave him variety. Instead of falling forward over the handle-bars, he fell backward over the big wheel. Yet even here he was in a class by himself. The inventors of that wheel believed it impossible to fall forward; but Mr. Marston did it.

One dark night he rode down a long inclined driveway from a farmhouse. It was a glorious coast; but some one had carelessly closed the four-bar gate at the foot of the drive, and when Mr. Marston reached it he proved that a man with a talent in that direction could go over the handle-bars. But before he had time to boast about it much some one invented the low wheel. Mr. Marston did not have so far to fall after that; but he kept up his average by falling oftener.

He had been accustomed to mount his high wheel but once every two days or so. "Well," he used to say, with an assumed tone of carelessness, "I guess I'll go out and get on my wheel." Then he would go out and get on it, and fall off, and enter the house again and recuperate for a couple of days. He was known in town as "Marston the Arnicast." When the wind was in the right direction you could smell him arriving long before he came in sight—especially if he was riding his wheel.

When the automobile arrived the first part of it Marston studied up was the brake. He wanted an instan-

taneous brake, that at the slightest touch would set itself so hard and fast that it would have to be unscrewed and prized loose from the wheel before the car could move another inch. What he would have liked would have been a quick-cooling, white-hot iron brake that at a touch of the finger would weld itself to the wheel and cool there, holding the wheel firm and immovable.

He had acquired an interest in brakes while riding his bicycle. He had eight kinds of brakes on his bicycle, all patented and guaranteed, and when he pressed a bulb they would all set immediately. It made bicycling absolutely safe. The moment he touched the bulb the wheel would stop. Mr. Marston would, simultaneously, dismount, lighting on his hands and some available part of his head. In a few hours he would have the brakes all unbraked again, and ride two or three yards further.

So when automobiles came in he knew a great deal about brakes, and the machine he bought had a good one. It was only a little five-horse power car, but it had a sixty-horse power brake. It could stop that car in one inch headway, and stop it absolutely. In no other possible way could Mr. Marston have been able to fall out of that tame little automobile, but he did it with the brake. He was always going over the dashboard. Whenever any one in town heard a dull thud they did not even look round, they merely said: "There goes Mr. Marston again." Or sometimes they would say: "I heard Mr. Marston is still thudding." They call him "Marston the Out-o'-mobilist."

The balloon did not interest Mr. Marston. He felt that it was merely a toy. But when the aeroplane was perfected he began to wear a haggard, careworn look. He would jump nervously at slight sounds, and turn pale when he heard a chicken fly into a fence. The sound of wings did it. He would look out of his window at the pretty little feathered songsters sporting in his trees, and then groan, and say: "Ding-bust the birds; I wish there never had been any."

Falling out of an aeroplane is no joke. Bicycles are all right, and high-wheel bicycles are all right, and automobiles are all right—you don't have far to fall, and you can get used to it—but a man can hardly fall out of an aeroplane often enough to get used to it. Just a few brief falls and you have to get a new man. The best ownership for an aeroplane is a stock company; as soon as one stockholder is used up another can fly it. In that way the same owner can fly an aeroplane quite a while. The more stockholders the better.

If Mr. Marston had not thought as he did about the twentieth century, he would not have bought an aeroplane, but he saw that, as he had been privileged to live in this wonderful century, it was his duty to profit by all its superiorities. He would not, himself, have invented an aeroplane. He would have invented something less flighty, something near to the ground, like a rocking-chair. But, since aeroplanes were invented and for sale, there was nothing for him to do but have one.

All Mr. Marston's most careful inquiries and investigations left him assured that the matter of aeroplane brakes had been frightfully neglected. He could not find an aeroplane of any type that had any brake at all. The only way to stop an aeroplane suddenly seemed to be to run it against a house or a tree, and a house or a tree is a poor kind of brake for an aeroplanist who has any object except to stop suddenly.

The more Mr. Marston thought about it the greater became his conviction that he was not the man to jump lightly on a powerful aeroplane and with a merry laugh dash into the side of a brick house. He was willing and eager to fall over the dashboard of a small automobile, but he did not like to fall over houses. To strike a brick house of the three-story kind at about the second story and fall up over the roof and down the other side, and get any pleasure out of it, requires a man of a peculiar type. No ordinary man can tell *what* is on the other side of a house he is falling over. It might be feather beds, but the betting is all the other way. A man who falls over a house has to take chances.

Mr. Marston was a small man, but compact, and compact bodies fall swiftly. He was a mild-mannered man, gentle, and of a retiring, lady-like disposition, and not at all the kind of man to fall boldly over other people's houses. He was easily abashed, and blushed painfully at slight causes, and the rude words of one whose house he had fallen over would have pained him.

It became evident to Mr. Marston that he could not aviate his own aeroplane. When the aeroplane was delivered, and was set up ready to fly, in his back garden, Mr. Marston walked around it, admiring the ingenuity of man; he swelled with thoughts of how weak, earth-tied man had at last become the rival of the birds. The nobler the thoughts the more scared he became. The aeroplane was so big. The huge, wide-spreading wings looked dangerous. He wished there were small aeroplanes, like his small automobile. He didn't care how small. He would have liked one the size of a roller-skate.

As he looked at those beautiful white wings, spreading wide like the sails of some new kind of yacht, and at the tremendously powerful engine, Mr. Marston shuddered. If it had been a huge sausage-grinder with a sign "Gentlemen enter here" on it, it could not have looked more threatening to Mr. Marston.

He saw instantly that he was not the man to operate an aeroplane. He must have a chauffeur, but he was even more afraid of chauffeurs than of aeroplanes. A chauffeur is a rough, burly man who jams a cap on his head, slaps on a pair of disguising goggles, yanks all the valves open and dashes madly through the scenery, regardless of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness. Never would Mr. Marston have dared to have a chauffeur for his automobile, where there are three dimensions of danger—to the right, to the left, and straight ahead—and still less would he have trusted one in an aeroplane where a fourth dimension of danger is added—straight down. But without one he could not aviate.

He was afraid of his aeroplane without a chauffeur, and he was afraid of it with one, but he thought that perhaps he could find a tame, gentle chauffeur somewhere to chauf his aeroplane. What he wanted was an anæmic chauffeur; one, say, who had been a clerk in a ribbon counter before he took to aviation. He would have liked a chauffeur with his hair parted in the middle and a tuberose in his buttonhole.

A ladylike chauffeur was what he wanted, and the more Mr. Marston thought about it the surer he became that the thing most like a lady is a lady. If he could only hire a lady chauffeur! If he could get, for example, a gently bred lady; one fond of poetry and Jane Austen; one who was serious-minded and a trifle delicate in health, and to whom any sudden shock would be serious; if he could get such a chauffeur he would not be afraid to aviate. But she must be well-versed in aeroplanes. What he wanted was a thoughtful lady, of gentle disposition, who knew how to handle a monkey wrench.

He laid his need before the makers of the aeroplane, and they said they had just the thing for him. She was well broken to aviation, owned a certificate of graduation granted by their aviation school, and was not nervous. Her name was Philomela Montague. As soon as he read her name Mr. Marston wrote and engaged her.

He was standing by his aeroplane, looking at it with awe, when Philomela Montague arrived. He could not see much of her at first. Her cap was pulled well down in front, the collar of her long coat was turned up, and between the two there was just room for the goggles to stare. Her common-sense shoes had hobnails. She had her hands in the coat pockets, jingling a wrench against an oil can.

"Hello there, Bill," she said roughly, but with good nature. "That your little bonebreaker? You're this fellow Marston, what? I'm Philomela. But for heaven's sake, cut it. Call me Phil. Been up in the air yet?"

"You—you—are my chauffeur?"

"Well, you just bet. I'm a chauf all right. I'm the star chauffeurette of this country. Where did you get this old relic, anyway?" She was peeling off her coat, all the time eyeing Mr. Marston's aeroplane with undisguised contempt.

"I bought it," said Mr. Marston. "It isn't a relic. It is new. It is just from the shop. It is a very nice aeroplane."

"Oh, I can fly it all right, if it comes to that," said Philomela scornfully. "I can fly a chunk of ice if there is any fly in it. But I don't call that an aeroplane. I call it a scrap-heap on wings."

Mr. Marston looked at the shining enamel of the braces and the glittering white of the wings and fans. He saw a perfect, immaculate aeroplane. "It is no scrap-heap whatsoever, Miss Phil," he said, with some irritation. "It is an admirable aeroplane. You will admit it when you know it better."

"Don't fret, Bill, I know it well enough! But I don't care if you don't. All I ask is, how did you come to get it?"

Mr. Marston was angry. His view of his new chauffeurette did not tend to mollify him. Now that her coat and goggles were off he could see her. Her hair was cut short, her face wore a hard scowl, her chin stuck out aggressively, and she was as big and burly as a policeman. She looked like a lady prize-fighter of the Ninth Ward. And so she had been. It was Billy the Biff who had given her the broken nose. Sweet little creature she was!

"I got the aeroplane by buying it," said Mr. Marston; "and the reason I bought this one was because it was the smallest they had. I like them small. My automobile is small. They said this one had been tested."

"You bet!" said Philomela. "It has been tested! I know this old winged teapot. It is the bone-breaker of the Twentieth Century, and no mistake! 1908 model, old style eccentric inter-locking gear, left-hand gravity feed! What are you going to call it!"

"I thought I would call it 'Tootsie.'"

"'Tootsie!'" exclaimed Philomela.

"After my pet canary," said Mr. Marston, blushing.

"Has that canary killed many men?" asked Philomela. "Has it got the habit of opening its jaws and crushing a few ribs now and then? No? Well, I wouldn't call this air-boat 'Tootsie'! Not 'Tootsie'! The last time it was smashed up, and before it was daubed over with fresh paint this time, it had a good name. I'd stick to that name. I'd call it the Flying Hyena."

"Hyenas don't fly," said Mr. Marston timidly. "At least I don't think they do. And they don't kill men. I don't believe they even crush ribs."

"Don't they? Well, this one does," said Philomela. She was poking around in the engine, shaking her head from time to time, tightening bolts and turning screws. "All right!" she said at length, straightening up and pulling on her gloves. "I guess she'll work. I'm ready any time you are, Bill. You're my boss. I can't say we'll do much with this old wreck of ages, but Philly can get out all the speed there is in it. Any time you want to start, say so, and you don't need to worry about me being on the spot. I may not chauf as well as some of those men chauffeurs that have been at it longer, but I have my nerve. Speed—that's what I get. And height. Why, I do things with old wrecks like this that no man ever dares do. You got the right fellow when you got me. I'm willing to take chances."

She turned to Mr. Marston to receive his orders.

"Say," she said inquisitively, "what makes you that pea-green colour? Is that your natural complexion?"

"Not—not always," said Mr. Marston weakly. "Sometimes I'm—I'm pea-green. It—it runs in the family. When I'm that colour I never aviate. It—it——"

"It what?"

"It don't harmonise with the blue sky," said Mr. Marston, happy to have thought of any reason. "So I won't aviate to-day, thank you."

Philomela watched him as he hurried with trembling steps towards the house.

"Say," she shouted, just before he reached the door, "you might wear a mask."

But Mr. Marston thought he would not fly that day.

Aeroplanes never became so com-

mon that they filled the sky. All that sort of thing, like

> The sky is full of airships vast,
> We hear their endless hum,

was the mere enthusiastic poetry of the days when aviation was in its infancy. Many people who walked never owned bicycles, many who owned bicycles never owned automobiles, and many who owned automobiles never owned aeroplanes. It was a survival of the fittest. Of course, when aeroplanes were put on the market and advertised in the magazines, many were sold, but there is a great deal of sky, and aeroplanes never crowded it. As new aeroplanes entered the air old ones were continually dropping out of it.

But as the fad increased the aeroplane became an ordinary sight, at least. Mr. Marston's licence was No. 18,907, and that was in New York State alone, so an aeroplane could land in a town of moderately metropolitan manners and not draw a crowd. People were used to them. But Mr. Marston's aeroplane drew a crowd. As soon as it was known that he had one the townsfolk began to gather. They were interested. They had seen Mr. Marston cycle and motor, and they knew how he would aviate. They thought he would do it in a different way from other men. They hoped he would. They liked the weird and unusual.

The next morning, when Mr. Marston looked out of the window, he saw that his back lot was full of people, and when they saw him standing at the window they raised a cheer. He felt greatly depressed. It saddened him to see men to whom he had done no wrong so cheerful at the prospect of seeing him aviate. The weather depressed him, too. It was perfect weather for aviating. He looked in his mirror, and he was not even pea-green. He hardly had a green tint. So he read his will again, to see that there were no changes he wanted made, and went downstairs. There could be no escape. He must fly!

When a man who doesn't like a cold bath has to take one he disrobes, grits his teeth, and plunges in. Personally, I also close my eyes and hold my breath. Mr. Marston stood five minutes nerving himself for the plunge. He could hear the "pup-pup-pup" of the motor of the aeroplane, which Philomela had already started. He adjusted his goggles and put on his coat. He drew on his gloves and pulled his cap well over his eyes. He doubled up his fists, drew a deep breath, bent slightly forward from the waist, opened the door, walked out hastily, looking neither to right nor left.

A cheer burst from his fellow citizens, but he did not heed it. Straight as an arrow he walked to the aeroplane, mounted his seat, shut his eyes, held his breath, and murmured in a weak whisper: "Go ahead!" He was ready to die for the glorious Twentieth Century.

Clutching the edge of the seat tightly, he felt a gentle swaying motion. A cool breeze swept his cheek. He leaned from side to side as the swaying increased, and in a moment dared to breathe. Slowly, slowly, he opened his eyes. The aeroplane had not moved. But his neighbours, open-mouthed and astounded, were gazing at him as he swayed from side to side. They surrounded him in a ring, and all were looking at him in amazement, except four or five who were watching Philomela, who was poking into the motor. Mr. Marston stopped swaying suddenly.

"I guess that will have to do," said Philomela, doubtfully. She began to draw on her gloves, stopped, and went back to the motor. There was a great deal in her manner to cause a timid aviator uneasiness. She walked over to where her coat was hung in a low tree crotch, but as she walked she looked back at the motor, and when she had put her coat on, she poked into the motor again. She adjusted her cap and goggles, and put one foot on the platform.

"Got your chart with you?" she asked Mr. Marston.

"Chart?" said Mr. Marston.

"Your physiological chart," said Philomela disgustedly. "You don't mean to say you are going flying without a physiological chart, Bill? Well, never mind; I've got an extra one."

She went to her tool chest, which was standing against a tree, and took out the chart. It was large when she

unfolded it, as large as a full-grown man almost. It represented a skinned man, printed in pink, with red arteries and blue veins, and white bones. Not a bone was missing, and every one was numbered. She handed it to Mr. Marston.

"Now, Bill," she said, "when we fall we will likely bust a bone or two. I never fly without a chart. Then all that a fellow has to do is to look on the chart and he knows what is broken. Here's mine."

She unrolled her own chart. Mr. Marston gazed at it with a subdued and misty gaze. He suddenly felt outrageously boned. He could not feel his flesh any more, only his bones, and he was crowded full of them, and every bone felt brittle. He was afraid to move for fear he might break a bone or two. When he breathed, he imagined he could feel one bone grating against another. Never before had he realised what a bony creature a man is. It seemed a crime to take such a structure of bones up in the air and drop it.

"Them marks?" said Philomela, when Mr. Marston stammered the inquiry—her chart was criss-crossed with lines in ink, thousands of them, it seemed to Mr. Marston; "why, them's my bone record. Whenever I break a bone, I mark it down on the chart, and next time I try to fall so as to break the same bone in the same place. Now, you've got a snap. You don't have to worry about how you'll fall. You can fall any way, and break any bone you've got. Why," she exclaimed enthusiastically, "you can break every bone in your body at once, and not need to worry about it. There won't be a second-handed break in the lot!"

Mr. Marston breathed hard, and a sickly whiteness passed across his face as he felt his ribs grating together. He pressed his hand gently against his side, and it really seemed to him that the third rib from the bottom on the left side was loose at the joint. He pushed it gently, as one tries a loose tooth, with his thumb.

"Now, Bill," said Philomela, "I seen you turn white, but you needn't feel jealous just because I've got a chart that's marked up while yours isn't. I don't say but what I'm proud of that chart of mine, and I'll put it alongside of anybody's for a bone record. So far as I know there's only one other that has more broken bones on it, and that fellow had two years' start of me, but if we have a good trip to-day I aim to leave him way behind. And it's a grand chance for you, a grand chance! Why," she cried, "with this here old 1908 model, and me chauffing it, and you with a clean bone chart to start with, there ain't no reason in the world why you shouldn't break the world record for one-fall bone-breaks, and take the record away from that Frenchman. But you got to be careful. His record is two hundred breaks, and there ain't but one hundred and ninety-eight bones on the chart, so try and tumble so at least three bones will be broke in two places. That will make two hundred and one. But," she added pleasantly, "you can break as many more as you feel like."

Philomela stepped into the aeroplane and took her seat. Mr. Marston stiffened up and grasped the handles of his seat with a death grip. The motor was rattling like a rapid-fire gun. Philomela put her hand on the starting lever. She glanced at Mr. Marston to see that he was ready.

"That's right!" she cried. "You've got the idea. Keep stiff. The stiffer you keep the more bones you'll break. You're a sport all right, I can see that."

If Cleopatra's Needle should instantly turn into a shaft of currant jelly it could not collapse as rapidly as Mr. Marston collapsed. He limbered up instantly. If he had been made of gelatine and had been out in the dew overnight he could not have been limper than he was one moment after Philomela's words. He tried to see how limber-jointed a man could be when he really tried, and he was as limp as that, and sorry he could not be more so.

Philomela touched the starting lever. The crowd fell back impetuously. The two great canvas-covered rudders whirred. The aeroplane hesitated, rose a foot, settled back, and then, with the

whole crowd yelling and throwing their hats in the air, it left the ground. "Tootsie" was on the wing.

All birds do not soar like the lark. "Tootsie" didn't. She rose about five feet into the air and made a graceful curve. Instantly all the citizens on that side lay down flat. With a huge swoop "Tootsie" rounded, and instantly all the citizens on *that* side lay down flat. It looked like a lying-down match, in squads, but neither side won. It was a tie. Each side was as flat as it could be. Some were one side up, and some the other side up, but it was just an informal lying-down match, without rules, so it did not matter. The principal thing was to get down quickly, and every one did.

An aeroplane does not loiter once it is started. It is hasty by nature. "Tootsie" was no exception. She made her curve to the left and then her curve to the right, and darted gaily away. She darted over a three-foot stone fence into Mr. Marston's cow pasture, and you never saw an animal quite so surprised as Mr. Marston's cow was.

It was not that the blunt nose of the aeroplane bumped the cow, although any cow would be surprised to be bumped by an aeroplane; it was the persistence of the aeroplane. Of course, the cow did not wait after she was bumped. No cow would do that. She started just as any other cow would start—only faster—and travelled just as any cow would travel, rising higher at the rear than in front, and going in unsteadied leaps. The first time the aeroplane hit the cow the cow started to give voice, as a sportsman would say, but she thought better of it, and ran.

By she I mean the cow. An aeroplane is "she" also, and when both a cow and an aeroplane are mentioned they are apt to get mixed up, but Mr. Marston's cow and his aeroplane did not. They travelled tandem; first the cow, and then the aeroplane. Every time the aeroplane bumped the cow the motor would skip a few revolutions, and every time the cow was hit by the aeroplane she was boosted ten or fifteen feet ahead suddenly, and would grunt. It is wonderful how quickly a common red cow that has never done anything but low and moo can learn to grunt under press of circumstances.

Philomela was working hard. She acted as if she thought something was the matter with the motor, and she was very busy. She did not want to chase a cow any more than the cow wanted to be chased, and every time the aeroplane hit the cow with a bump Philomela said: "Oh! layer cake!" or oh! something else ladylike. Philomela wanted to soar, but "Tootsie" wanted to boost a red cow across the pasture in consecutive boosts, and "Tootsie" had her way. Mr. Marston did not want anything—he was beyond that stage—but every time the aeroplane bumped the cow he forgot to stay limber, and that showed the awful state of mind he was in.

The cow dashed impetuously across the pasture, and the aeroplane dashed after her. It was all new to the cow. She had never heard of a cow-hunting aeroplane, and the aeroplane had never heard of a cow that insistently got in front of aeroplanes. They were both provoked, and the cow rushed madly to her stable.

A cow, sufficiently urged from behind by an aeroplane, can cross a pasture rapidly, and an aeroplane thinks nothing at all of a mile a minute. From the time the aeroplane left Mr. Marston's lot until the cow entered the stable was hardly a noticeable period of time. It was merely a whirr, a swoop, some bumps, and then the cow dashed into the stone stable. So did the aeroplane.

Here is Axiom I. in the Aeroplane Book: "Cows can enter stone stables more easily than aeroplanes can." But Mr. Marston entered. When the aeroplane struck the stone barnside, Mr. Marston was holding tightly the arms of his seat, and when he left the aeroplane he took the seat with him. He entered the stable through a second-story window, removing the window-panes as he went, at the same time turning a neat somersault, like the circus lady going through the papered hoop, except that Mr. Marston went more quickly and kept going until the

opposite wall of the stable interfered. When he landed there he grunted just exactly like the cow! Not a loud grunt, but a low, intense one.

When Mr. Marston recovered his senses he crept to the window. He had no bones broken. He made sure of that first. Then he crawled on his hands and knees to the window and looked out. Nearly all the citizens were pawing through the tall weeds about the stable, looking for him, as boys look for a lost ball, but a dozen or so were gathered in a half-circle under his window. Mr. Marston leaned cautiously and looked down.

Philomela, his chauffeurette, was sitting on the ground surrounded by portions of aeroplane, with her back against the stone wall of the stable, but she was paying no attention to the interested spectators. Before her was spread her bone chart, and a pleased smile rested on her face; and one by one, as she felt for and found the broken bones with her left hand, she marked them on the chart with a fountain pen.

The Plum Pudding.

By D. MEREDITH.

THERE was nothing jerry-built about Mrs. Harris, mentally, physically, or morally; her character had been built upon a rock.

She reigned supreme in a little village in the South, and no one denied her supremacy.

In every emergency Mrs. Harris was called upon.

When little Billy Brown, the small son of her next-door-neighbour, swallowed a sixpence which had been given to him for a birthday present, his mother flew to Mrs. Harris for advice.

It was Mrs. Harris who lent out her preserving-pan at a penny a time, so that the neighbours—those who were not sufficiently fortunate to possess such a luxury—could make their own preserves. "I would lend it for nothing," she explained, "only when this wears out I shall have to buy another to replace it."

Every one in the village quoted Mrs. Harris. They quoted her like Mrs. Gamp quoted the celebrated Mrs. Harris.

She gave advice on all subjects gratis, and with a beaming smile.

"Oh! ask Mrs. Harris; she'll know," were words which were continually heard in the village.

The curate, in one of his jocular moments, had been overheard to say that "What Mrs. Harris didn't know was not worth knowing." She was a paragon of domestic efficiency, and in the branch known as cooking she shone as a constellation. When a wedding or funeral took place Mrs. Harris was "invited" to boil the hams and make the cakes which were considered essential for the success of those festivities. Mrs. Harris was a widow, well favoured, and bearing fifty years lightly upon her shoulders.

Ten years she had been resident in this small and picturesque village, during which time she had received numerous offers of marriage, but she had refused one and all as gently as possible with the words:—

"I don't believe in marrying more than once. I fell in love with Harris when I was twenty. I married him when I was twenty-two, and"—the tears which had gathered to her eyes stole slowly down her cheeks—"I love his memory as much as I loved him. I was faithful to him when he lived, and I would desecrate his memory if I married again. I hope to meet him some day in another world."

When Mrs. Harris's supremacy was at its height there came to the village a spinster of uncertain age. It was rumoured in the neighbourhood that she had been jilted.

The rumour had more than a grain of truth in it. Twenty years before Miss Lavinia Golightly had been jilted on the eve of her wedding day. Her first love affair ending so disastrously had been effectual in sapping her *joie de vivre*, and she barricaded herself with a wall of reserve and a sour temper.

The neighbours described her as being short-tempered, and no longer young.

She had been a cooking mistress by profession, but, having been left a small fortune, she had retired to shed the light of her presence in her brother's home in the village.

In course of time she became acquainted with Mrs. Harris.

On all sides Mrs. Harris and her many perfections were sung, consequently, so warped and jealous was Miss Golightly's nature, that a violent antipathy against Mrs. Harris sprang up in her breast.

Now, it happened that as Christmas time drew near Miss Golightly thought that she would make a plum pudding. In her own estimation her plum puddings were second to none, so that

when she served it at dinner she expected a rhapsody from her brother in its favour.

After he had demolished a large portion of it with evident relish, she said, with a gleam of triumph in her eye:

"It is not often you taste a pudding like that, Josiah."

"It's very tasty," he admitted; "but you should just taste one of those that Mrs. Harris makes." He smacked his lips in appreciation of the absent dainty, and, quite unaware of a slight disturbance in the atmosphere, went sublimely on:

"Never tasted anything like her puddings."

Miss Golightly rose—the name of Mrs. Harris grated on her nerves—and would have withered Josiah with a glance had he been less substantial.

"Mrs. Harris! Mrs. Harris! Mrs. Harris! Am I to hear nothing but that woman's name from morning until night? Who nursed Mrs. Duffy when she was suffering from appendicitis? Mrs. Harris! Who paid part of Mary Gee's expenses when she was ordered to a sanatorium for two months? Mrs. Harris! Who makes plum puddings? Mrs. Harris!"

Miss Golightly hesitated, glared at Josiah to punctuate her remarks, and, unable to recall any more of Mrs. Harris's good deeds, she finished with the absurdity:

"Who killed Cock Robin? Mrs. Harris!"

Josiah stared at her open-mouthed, unable to comprehend the meaning of her sudden outburst.

Miss Golightly renewed the attack:

"Josiah," she continued deliberately, "I have made plum puddings for years. I have taught others to make plum puddings. My plum puddings have been commended as being second to none. If Mrs. Harris is a better cook than I am, marry her, Josiah, marry her."

"I would, only she refused me," Josiah answered.

"She refused you! Do you mean to tell me, Josiah"—her voice was ominously calm—"that you so far forgot yourself as to propose to that woman?"

"A fine woman, Mrs. Harris," remarked her brother. "One of the best!"

Miss Golightly sailed out of the room in a black mood.

A week later she was engaged in brushing the hall, when little Billie Brown knocked at the door, and handed a note to her.

It ran as follows:—

Hawthorn Cottage,
December 21st.

Dear Miss Golightly,

Can you come to have dinner with me on Sunday? Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Snape, and one or two others are coming. They are anxious to taste one of my plum puddings. I am supposed to have a little reputation in that line. Do try to come. Kind regards to your brother, and accept the same yourself.

Yours sincerely,
BETSEY HARRIS.

Miss Golightly pondered as to whether she should accept or refuse the invitation.

Finally she decided to accept it, and wrote a note to that effect.

The reason for the acceptance was that she had laid a deep plot against Mrs. Harris, which she intended to perpetrate on December 21. On the day preceding the eventful dinner-party Miss Golightly might have been seen bending at intervals over a pan which boiled a plum pudding. The unsuspecting pudding was to play a part in a farcical episode on the morrow.

The following day Miss Golightly ventured into the clear, keen frosty air. She was enveloped in a thick wrap, and she bore on her arm a large basket. She went in the direction of Mrs. Harris's cottage.

Having arrived there she was cordially received by her hostess, who apologised for being in her cooking-apron. Miss Golightly had timed her arrival somewhat early for purposes of her own. No sooner had Mrs. Harris mounted the stairs to her bedroom to change her attire than Miss Golightly made one dive from the little parlour into the kitchen.

She opened the lids of various pans which were by the fireside, spied a plum pudding in one, took it out, and placed another from her basket in its stead. She drained the water from Mrs. Harris's pudding, and put it in

her own basket. Had Miss Golightly been less engrossed in her own deed she might have heard a slight creak in the neighbourhood of the stairs. It was Mrs. Harris coming downstairs in stockinged feet for some soap.

She appeared in the door at the crucial moment to see Miss Golightly change the puddings.

Her surprise at the proceeding was great. She watched further operations, and then crept stealthily upstairs again. She could not fathom the reason for the change of puddings, but fancied it was possibly meant as a practical joke.

In due course the other guests arrived, and Mrs. Harris begged Miss Golightly to conduct them upstairs, so that they might divest themselves of their wraps. Taking advantage of their absence, Mrs. Harris rechanged the puddings, placing Miss Golightly's back again in the basket, and enjoying her own joke the while. Dinner-time arrived, and at the table Miss Golightly was almost vivacious. The plum pudding at last made its appearance, and was much enjoyed by everyone present. They all voted it—that is, all excepting Miss Golightly—the best pudding they had ever tasted.

Miss Golightly smiled enigmatically, and took the praise as a tribute to her own pudding.

Mrs. Brown spoke:

"No one can approach you in the cooking line, Mrs. Harris."

Miss Golightly laughed.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Brown, I made that pudding."

She glanced triumphantly at Mrs. Harris.

"I had heard so much in praise of Mrs. Harris's cooking that I decided to have a little joke. I changed the puddings, and it is mine you have eaten. I am glad you enjoyed it so much. Mrs. Harris, yours is in my basket. You may have it. I am satisfied that my puddings are second to none."

Tears of mirth coursed down the comely cheeks of Mrs. Harris while she explained:

"I saw you change them, and I changed them back again. If you look in the basket you will possibly recognise your own cloth and string."

Miss Golightly rose, cast a furious glance at the assembled company, went for her basket, and examined the pudding to verify the truth of Mrs. Harris's statement. Recognising her own pudding, she enveloped herself in her wrap, and walked majestically out of the house, leaving her neighbours staring after her in blank astonishment, while Mrs. Brown pointed significantly to her forehead.

Laughing Jack.

A TALE OF A BORDER CHRISTMAS IN THE OLDEN TIME

By F. C. PALMER.

PART I.

HOW HE SWORE A GREAT OATH.

IT was the dinner-hour at Fell Pele, in North Tynedale, and James Armstrong, the guardian of the old, grey, ivy-clad tower, and some fifteen souls dependent upon him, trooped hungrily into the dining-hall, and set themselves expectantly about the long oaken table. In other days, when other Armstrongs had held the tower, the place had perforce to accommodate three, four, and often five times that number, the greater part of them hard-faced, sinewy Northumbrian reivers, strong, fierce men, armed with lance and claymore, who held sweetest that meat of life that lay closest to the bone of death.

The times were wild, and a man had goodly need to know the use of the broadsword ere he was reckoned of any worth by his fellow-dalesmen. Cattle thieving was accounted just as honourable and a vastly manlier means of livelihood than honest farming, and petty wars, feuds, forays, and arsons flourished along the whole Border. But, like Gallio, James Armstrong cared for none of these things. He was a dreamer of dreams, a weaver of verses, a student of the stars, and but ill-fitted to be a dweller in North Tynedale. His wife had died young, leaving behind her one child, a son, who, at the time of this story, had arrived at the twenty-third year of his life, stood six feet three in his riding-boots, and went by the name of "Laughing Jack Armstrong," by reason of his merry blue eyes and quick laughing lips.

When his wife died James Armstrong sent for his sister, Mistress Noble, whom a Scottish spear had left a widow, to keep house for him. So she came to Fell Pele, bringing with her a daughter, rather less than a year younger than Laughing Jack. Constant raids from Redesdale, Tweedside, and Annandale had played havoc among the Fell Pele herds, but James had taken no manner of revenge, having neither the heart nor the inclination to turn the tables upon the marauders. So gradually the Armstrong retainers and followers had fallen away and given the use of their sword arms to more warlike chiefs, whose tables groaned under greater weight of good cheer in the form of stolen beef and mutton.

Thus it happened that, on the 23rd day of December in the year of grace 1583, only fifteen souls, nine of whom were womenfolk, assembled in the old hall at the dinner-hour.

With his usual listless step, James Armstrong walked to his place at the head of the long table, where a great, covered dish held the day's chief joint. He stood in his place, piously called a blessing upon the meal, and lifted the cover.

For a moment he stared in mute surprise, then, letting the cover fall with a noisy clatter to the stone floor, called out in a querulous tone:

"What is the meaning of this foolery?"

For there, instead of the accustomed joint, lay, shining upon the dish, a pair of long steel spurs, which was the recognised signal, throughout all Borderland, that the larder was empty, and that the chief of the house must go forth upon the raid.

"What is the meaning on't?" cried his sister fiercely. "It means this, James Armstrong, thy larders are empty, and there are no cattle in thy pastures. All is gone, and 'tis thy

doing! Thou, with thy star-gazing and other folly, hast been content to sit moping i' the house while Charltons and Whitfields, Douglases and Halls have fattened upon thy beeves. Art thou not man enough to go out and drive back what is thine own, or must we o' Fell Pele starve while all our neighbours hold their yuletide feasts?"

The guardian of the Pele vouchsafed no reply, but sat staring dazedly at the pair of glittering spurs.

Then old Gertrude, who had been his nurse and his son's nurse also, stood in her place at the lower end of the table.

"Woe is me that ever I lived to see this shameful day," she cried, her piercing old voice echoing shrilly through the great room. "Seventy-nine years have I dwelt here i' the Pele, and now this! Oh, James Armstrong, harken to me, who nursed ye when ye were but a suckling bairn. What ails ye, man? Hae ye nae mair strength nor courage? Are the Armstrongs become a race o' craven fules, a tribe o' soft women? Nay, women are fair harder than ye. Shame on ye, ye are afeerd, thou and thy son!"

Then Laughing Jack forbore to laugh, and, springing to his feet, cried in a great voice that thundered throughout the whole hall:

"Who says that the Armstrongs are cravens and soft women? I will give them the lie, by the blood of my fathers, by St. Wilfrid o' Hexham, by my sword, I swear that, come what may on't, I will ride forth this day, and if there be no beef upon this table o' Christmas morn I, John Armstrong, will be lying out on the heather, a bloody corpse!"

So saying he filled a great pewter mug with strong ale, till it over-flowed, and drank it off at one huge gulp, then broke into a hard fierce laugh.

"Who rides with me?" he called.

Old Hobbie Dodds, the oldest, truest servant upon the farm, sprang up.

"I crossed the border mony a time ahint thy grandfather. I will cross yet again wi' thee," he said simply, and the other three menservants, who were Hobbie's sons, begged that they might be allowed to ride forth also.

But James, at the head of the table, frowned heavily.

"What folly sayest thou, son?" he asked.

"I ride forth to the raid," quoth Laughing Jack, boldly.

"Nay, and thou shalt not!" roared the elder.

"I have sworn an oath, father."

"A murrain on thy fools' oaths; thou shalt stay i' the Pele, nor lead my servants into bloodshed. Hearest thou?"

"But——"

"Argue not against thy father, knave."

So Laughing Jack held his peace, but his brain was not unfree from thought as he walked slowly away from a feast where the meat bore so cold and warlike a look.

"I have sworn," he muttered to himself. "I have sworn an oath."

An hour afterwards Laughing Jack was on his knees in the old armoury seeking out swords and spears, choosing those that still bore some appearance of sharpness, in spite of their long sleep through the years of James Armstrong's guardianship. While he was thus engaged the door opened gently, and a girl stood smiling upon the threshold.

Mary Noble was that child we have already been told of as being the daughter of Mistress Noble, James Armstrong's sister. She was tall, straight built, and fair-haired. Beautiful to look upon, she was a true daughter of Borderland.

"What dost thou here, Jack?" she asked, and her voice was like the rippling of a young brook.

"I seek a sharp sword, cousin," he answered, scarcely troubling to look up, for, having lived together all their lives, he had never noticed her great beauty, and though he loved her dearly it was but the love of a brother for his sister. But with the girl it was different.

"Thou ridest out on this raid?" she asked.

"Have I not sworn?"

"Thou hast sworn," she said, understanding.

So she helped him to sharpen the weapons, and chose out a great broad-

sword for himself, and with her own hands buckled it to his side.

"When dost thou start?" she questioned, her voice trembling a little

"At midnight; not sooner, as I do not wish my father to see us, or I might quarrel with him, and 'twould bring ill-luck to our venture."

"Thou wilt take good heed of thyself?"

"I will keep my oath."

The girl gave a little sigh. "Could I ride with thee?" she asked.

"Nay, lass," he laughed. "'Tis no sport for women, this reiving. The four men ride with me, and thou shalt come with us to the fell gates and wish us luck as we start."

"I will pray to the Virgin till ye return," she said, simply.

Then they fell to talking of other things, and the day wore on and passed out in a red glare of western sunset, and the darkness crept silently and swiftly over the broad fells.

The stars were shining clear at midnight as five men rode out through the gate on to the wide moorland.

"Good-bye, Mary, lass!" called Laughing Jack.

"God go with ye, and bring ye safe back home again!" cried the girl as she closed the gate. She stood watching them as they rode over the skyline, their dark figures silhouetted against the pale northern light." "Please Heaven to bring him safe back to me," she cried out in the fulness of her heart.

Then a voice echoed loud over the fells, as Laughing Jack, revelling in the keen night air, sang gaily the old war-cry of his race :—

"Out on them, Fell Pele!
Red blood and cold steel!
Yet! Yet! Yet!"

PART II.

HOW HE FOUGHT THE RED KERR OF THISTLEHOPE.

So these five, Laughing Jack, Hobbie Dodds, and his three sons, Will, Dick, and Telfer, rode northward through the long December night.

Over Hareshaw Moor and on, keeping ever to the west of the road that runs through Horsley, Byrness, and Catcleugh, they pressed steadily forward, and at last crossed the border a little below Redesweir as the dawn of a clear winter's day was starting up along the eastern horizon.

Laughing Jack galloped a little ahead of his companions as they neared the border line, and was the first of them to set foot in Scotland.

"I have sworn an oath," he cried. "I have come to drive back what is mine own."

"See yonder clouds bankin' up ahint the fells," said old Hobbie. "There'll come snow afore night aa's warned"

"And red blood to melt it," quoth Laughing Jack, who, truth to tell, was looking forward, not so much to the cattle lifting he was pledged to, as the fight that would probably result therefrom.

A herd of beasts was grazing quietly upon the grassy slopes of Carter Fell, which sight brought joy into the heart of the young reiver.

"Whose land is that, Hobbie?" he asked.

"That'll be the Red Kerr's land, and those'll be his beasties," replied the old man, who knew every stone along the whole border side.

"Where does he live, this Red Kerr?"

"His place is at Thistlehope, which is on the north side o' the hill yonder. Many a beast of our'n has he driven away o' late years."

"Then, by St. Wilfrid, these are my father's cattle, and we must take them back to Fell Pele with us; methinks this Red Kerr is in our debt to that extent."

"Aye, that'll be true enough," quoth Will Dodds.

"Now, lads," cried Laughing Jack, "these are my cattle, and I'll drive 'em back to Fell Pele, despite the Red Kerr and his men. What care we o' Tynedale for the Red Kerr, or all the Scots i' Scotland, or all the devils o' hell, for matter o' that?"

So they rode up the banks of Carter Fell and began to drive the herd quietly down towards Redesyweir.

Meanwhile, folks were astir at Thistlehope, the big stone building, half farmhouse, half fortress, that lay to the northern side of the mountain. Christmas was close at hand, and preparations were under way for a great feast that the Red Kerr gave annually to his friends and neighbours on the northern side of the border. Only the night before he had sent out Malcolm Duncanson, his chief man, at the head of a large band of armed raiders to cross into England by Yetholm. To these he had given orders that they should return with as great a booty of cattle, sheep, horses, and deer as they could lay hands upon.

The Red Kerr himself did not go with them, for he was but newly wedded to Norma Sigurdsson, the Danish beauty, who was credited with being a past mistress in the black art of sorcery. So, for his wife's sake, he had not ridden out upon the Christmas foray, as was his wont, for she loved him dearly, and prayed him to remain with her at Thistlehope until after the New Year was in.

But, raid or no raid, the Red Kerr was ever astir by daybreak, and was now setting off those few of his own who had been left behind to their various duties about the farm.

He was a big, strong, rawboned Scot, with a great red beard and a shock of tousled red hair, which, since his marriage, he had endeavoured, quite unsuccessfully, to arrange in some pretence of order His eyes were a light greenish colour, and appeared somewhat weak, which appearance, however, was totally misleading, for he could recognise man or beast that he had only seen but once at a great distance—three miles, some said.

Norma, his wife, still lay asleep, for she was one of those who cannot bear to rise early in the mornings, and it was only on very rare occasions indeed that she had seen the wonderful glow of the rising sun over Cheviot. So on this morning, as usual, he had arisen quietly and donned a plain leather riding suit that he wore when employed in the tame occupation of attending to his own cattle. Ere he left the bedchamber he bent over the bed and kissed her lightly upon the forehead as she slept. For, uncouth savage though he was, he was, nevertheless, possessed of a certain rough sentiment, which, had he lived in a more civilised country than Borderland was at that period, might have developed into chivalry itself.

"My bonnie lass," he murmured softly as he stood beside her, and he had right good cause to say it. For Norma Kerr was beautiful, her pale, creamy skin seeming to defy all the efforts of sun and wind to dye it the rough brick red that skins turn in moorland places, where the people are in the open air all day and in all weathers. The wonderful dark eyes, whose strange colour had no name, were closed now, but the heavy white lids and long black lashes were in themselves visions of beauty. Her masses of raven hair gleaming upon the white pillow made a strange contrast to her husband's great red head as he stooped to kiss the pale forehead. While he was standing thus admiringly beside her she stirred and began to mutter in her sleep:—

"A dead man upon the heather," she said.

The Red Kerr started back nervously, for Norma had the name of being somewhat of a witch, and words spoken by witches in sleep never fail to come true, however wild and fantastic they may be.

"Red Kerr, beware
Of the horseman fair!"

continued the dull, monotonous voice of the dreamer. The big man was very pale, and he waited to hear if she would say more, with something uncommonly like terror at his heart. But her dream seemed to pass away, and she sank again into a deep, even slumber.

The Red Kerr shuddered, and stole noiselessly from the room, drawing a long breath of relief as he reached the yard and stood with the fresh morning breeze blowing into his face.

"It's unco queer," he said to himself, and then tried to drive the thoughts out of his head by giving half a dozen orders at once to his drowsy menservants. On the rare days when he did devote himself to his own farm there was always a deal of things to

be done, and on this particular occasion there were, besides himself, but six men left upon the place, the rest having all ridden out on the Christmas raid.

He set to, therefore, and worked with a will, and was cleaning out a cow byre—for he held no work beneath him—when, all of a sudden, a man rode breathlessly into the yard.

"They're lifting the cattle on the south side o' the fell!" cried the horseman.

"Thunder and spears!" cried Kerr, for thieves hate to be robbed themselves.

"Who is it?"

"I dinna ken wha 'tis," said the man.

"'Twill be those cursed Swinburnes, or Charltons, making their games while my men are away at Yetholm," muttered his master.

"Nay, 'tis never Charlton, nor Swinburne either, for they travel i' great companies, and these men be but five."

"Five!" cried the red man in a voice where surprise and relief were mingled. "Five! What fools are these that seek to rob the Red Kerr with so small a band? By my spurs, I'll teach the swine a lesson i' sword-play!"

Then he bade his six men arm and mount, and they rode out of the yard and came cautiously round the hill to where they could obtain a view of the thieves.

"They're nobbut five feckless fules that wad rob the Red Kerr i' broad day," laughed one of the men.

But the Red Kerr's keen eyes were fixed on Laughing Jack, who was riding behind the herd with old Hobbie. A fine figure he cut with his long, fair hair blowing back from his handsome young face. Then the words of his sleeping wife came back to him with terrible meaning:—

"Red Kerr, beware
Of the horseman fair!"

Could this boy who now was riding past him at a distance of no more than two hundred yards be the horseman he was so scrupulously to avoid? Why, he had him at his mercy!

"Colin Heatherwell, send me an arrow into yon fair-haired lad," he said.

Then Colin, whose skill with the bow was unerring, drew the weapon he carried ever with him, and an arrow was sent speeding on its deadly errand.

Now it so happened that as Laughing Jack and the old man rode along together, both highly elated at the success their venture had thus far achieved, a noise up on the hill to the north side of them caused the old man to turn in his saddle.

"They're at us!" he cried, giving his horse a slight touch of the spur as he spake, causing it to spring a little ahead of Laughing Jack.

"They're at us!" And as his hand grasped his sword hilt a fierce grin came over his weather-beaten face. A grin that the next moment was changed into a little coughing noise as an arrow buried itself in his brave old body under the left arm

"I'm done!" he said, and rolled from the saddle to the ground, dead. Seeing the old man fall, the three sons galloped up to him.

"Dead!" said Laughing Jack, shortly. "And, by Heaven, he'll not die unavenged!" he added.

Then the bull-like voice of the Red Kerr roared over the fells:—

"Who are ye, ye limmer thieves?"

And for answer Laughing Jack put spurs to his horse and rode furiously at the Scots, with drawn sword, shouting as he rode the words of the old war-cry:—

"Out on them, Fell Pele!
Red blood and cold steel!
Yet! Yet! Yet!"

So they rode, four against seven, and the clash of steel rang out merrily on the keen winter air. Like men possessed of devils fought the three sons of old Hobbie, like a devil himself fought Laughing Jack. He and the Red Kerr instinctively sought each other out and went at it hammer and tongs, as the saying goes.

It was the young dalesman's first fight, but the Scot was fighting with

his wife's words ringing in his ears, and had a terrible dread that it would be his last.

Laughing Jack was by far the less skilful swordsman of the two, and at last his blade was smitten from his hand, and he stood at the mercy of his red-haired foe.

"Now I have ye!" cried Kerr. "Yield ye to the better man."

But the lust of fighting that ran in the Armstrong blood was at boiling-point. With never a word he sprang past the Scotsman's guard and smote him such a blow with his fist, full over the ear, that the huge borderer measured his length upon the heather and his sword flew harmlessly from his grasp.

Then Laughing Jack did a thing that shamed his race. Picking up the sword of his unconscious adversary he deliberately stabbed him through the body. It was a foul deed, but a fit of wild rage had taken possession of his heart, so that he knew not what he did.

He next looked round to see how his little band was holding its own, and to his surprise he found the battle had borne the others over the brow of the hill. He was alone.

"'Tis but the fortune of war," quoth he, philosophically, and set out to look for his horse. Presently he came in sight of Thistlehope. "So here is the wasps' nest!" he cried. "I wonder if there be any more of them at home?"

He came cautiously up to the house, found no one in the yard; but in a long outhouse a number of women were milking cows. These did not see him, and he went on to the house itself. The big hall was empty, as were all the lower rooms, for most of the serving maids, like their mistress, were still abed.

Then, with his sword still in his hand, he climbed the staircase, though what he expected to find I doubt if he himself knew. As he passed the door of the first room the sound of a woman's voice within made him pause and listen. The voice was chanting in a dull, monotonous tone, as one in a trance:

"They've murdered my lover and left him dead,
Stiff and stark by the heather bed."

PART III.

HOW HE KEPT HIS OATH.

Laughing Jack hesitated for a moment, then softly opened the door a foot or so and looked into the room.

"Wife or daughter?" he queried to himself, and then stepped lightly forward for a closer inspection.

"St. Wilfrid, but she is beautiful!" he exclaimed.

She moved restlessly as one who dreams of evil things, then the dream seemed to break suddenly, and she awoke.

Wide-eyed she stared at him a moment, then:

"Who are you? Where is my husband?"

Having the choice of two questions, he answered the latter.

"Dead," he said, simply.

"How?"

"Killed."

"By whom?"

"By a better man than he."

"Ye lie!"

"I speak truth."

"What is thy name?"

"Men call me Laughing Jack Armstrong."

"As I live thou'lt laugh backwards ere I've done wi' thee," she said, earnestly.

He stared at her a moment, then laughed brutally.

"Get thyself robed," he ordered.

"Wherefore?"

"We have a journey to make."

"We?"

"Aye, thou and I. Since I am the victor I must needs take back the spoils o' war."

She looked at him imploringly with her wonderful eyes gazing up at him, and then broke out into a great fit of sobbing. In that moment he loved

her—loved her with all the first wild passion of impetuous youth.

"Nay, do not weep," he said, softly advancing toward her as he spake. She shrank from him as one shrinks from some loathsome beast. Then, turning toward him:

"Why did ye this?"

"I have sworn an oath."

"To what end?" Then he told her the story, quite simply, as one might tell of a fox hunt or a stage play or any other impersonal thing, and she paused in her grief to listen as he told it.

"Have ye a mother?" she asked, in a strange, hard voice.

"Nay."

"No one that cares for ye—that loves ye dearly?"

"Nay—that is, except——" And he told her of Mary, saying how she was but a sister to him, and how she had bade him farewell by the fell gate, and the woman understood in a minute what the boy had not seen in twenty years.

"I would like to see her," said Norma.

"An' thou shalt!" he cried. "Thou shalt dress and ride back with me. Have I not won ye i' fair fight?"

The woman flinched, then, with a struggle, said:

"Aye, I will ride wi' thee."

So she robed herself swiftly, and they two went down into the yard and saddled horses and set off, driving a herd of beasts before them.

Over the border they rode southward, he wooing her ever with soft words, she replying with the same. But his heart burnt within him, while hers [illegible] ever colder.

Then the great, grey clouds, which had been banking up to the north, burst and poured down torrents of thick, white snow, so that tree and ground were covered ere they had ridden many miles.

"'Twill be a right proper Christmas!" cried the boy. "Snow on the ground, logs i' the hearth, beef on the board, and my bride at my knee. Now I can show them how this raid has made a man of me."

"'Twill make a god of ye," answered the woman.

"Thou sayest it?"

"Aye, surely."

"I love ye more for't."

So this strange pair rode on, driving the cattle before them, with the snow falling thick all about, so that the journey was but a slow one.

It was early on Christmas Day, and the snow was still falling fast when they came to the gate above Fell Pele—that same gate that Mary had closed behind him when he rode forth.

"Now we are home again," said Laughing Jack, "and I have fulfilled my oath."

He sprang from the saddle to unbar the gate and let the cattle through, and she did likewise, saying she would help him.

"My dear!" he said, and took her in his arms. "My dear!"

Something flashed in her hand as she put her arms about him, and he slid gently from her embrace on to the whitened heather, and a little crimson stream trickled out from his side.

"The Red Kerr is 'venged," said the woman, and, mounting once more, rode off a little way, to where a clump of trees seemed to afford some shelter from the fury of the storm.

The frightened beasts clustered round the gate, and some of them, who perchance knew the place of old, commenced to low.

Up in the Pele Tower Mary Noble knelt in prayer; suddenly the lowing of cattle broke upon her ear.

"Heaven has answered my prayers!" she cried, great tears of sheer joy shining in her blue eyes. Then, hastily pulling on a thick cloak, she ran downstairs and let herself out into the storm, and struggled up against the blinding snow till she reached the fell gate.

"Where art thou, Laughing Jack?" she cried.

For answer came a groan from the snow almost at her feet. She started back in horror, then flung herself on to her knees beside him.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"'Tis I, Mary.'

"I have kept my oath."

"What ails thee?"

"I am slain."

"By whom?" she cried.

And a voice came seemingly out of the heart of the storm:

"By the widow of the man he murdered."

Mary sprang to her feet.

"He has kept his oath, and I mine!" cried the voice.

For a moment there was a vision of a mounted figure in the whirling snow, for a moment only, and then the girl fell upon her knees beside the man she loved.

Laughing Jack made a great effort, and, rising to his knees, cried for the last time:

"Out on them, Fell Pele!
Red blood and cold steel!
Yet! Yet! Yet."

The Pedlar and his Pack.

With his treasures in a pack
Neatly tied upon his back,
With his dudheen black and reeking in his mouth,
Here comes bouncin' Mike McKinney,
Dancin', prancin' Mike McKinney,
The blithest of all pedlars North or South.

When the summer breeze is singin',
And the summer boughs are swingin',
Mike will play with all the childer by the way,
An' they're welcome in a minute
To his pack an' all that's in it,
An' Mike's jokin' makes them happy all the day.
An' the boys'll take his sack,
An' the girls'll take his pack,
An' they'll trouble and they'll coax him as they plaze,
Turn his treasures inside out,
Spread his jewels all about,
Mike but laughs at all their "purty little ways."

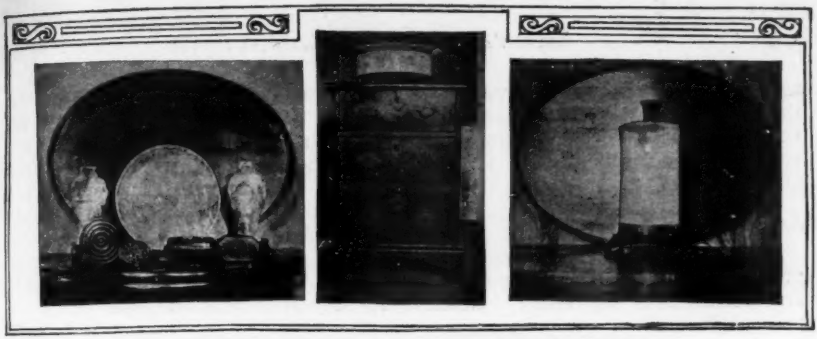
When the colleens hear he's comin',
From their knittin' they'll be runnin',
For his stock is full o' purty things to see,
An' they'll part with every penny
That they've got to Mike McKinney,
For Mike could lure the bird from off the tree.
An' it's "Molly, look at this,"
An' it's "Judy, look at that;
"Mavourneen, sure, 'tis purtier ye grow,
"If ye haven't got the money,
"Faix then I'll bestow it on ye,
"An' it's glad I am that I can plaze ye so."

When the Winter winds are blowin',
With their freezin' and their snowin',
When the roads are lone an' all the moorland's bare,
By the fire the neighbours gather,
For a chat with one another,
An' a caillee's* dull when Mickey isn't there.
Mickey's tales are never dry,
With a twinkle in his eye,
He will spin a yarn that's gone the round for years,
But the laugh comes all the same,
For his story's never tame,
Mirth is never far away when Mike appears.

Mickey's face is good to see
For his sowl is young and free,
An' his heart is just as tendher as it's true,
But his hair is turnin' grey,
An' he falters on his way,
For the years have left their mark on Mickey too;
An' the moorland pools are still,
An' the moorland mists are chill,
An' the moorland paths are treacherous an' drear,
So the night will maybe come,
When they'll wait for him at home,
An' they'll mourn him many a long an' lonely year.

NEIL CONNOR.

* Pronounced Kail'-ye, a gathering of neighbours over the fireside.



Some snuff-boxes, old china, and trays of the eighteenth-century make.

ANTIQUES AS CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

BY EGAN MEW.

SOME HINTS BY A COLLECTOR.

THE older view that those gifts which go from hand to hand at Christmastide must be made into a great display for twelve days and then pass into utter limbo and outer darkness is now giving place to a more agreeable spirit. During the last ten years or so the collector has been abroad, and no fireside, however well protected, but has one more or less informed amateur of the antique applied arts lecturing very pleasantly on its hearthrug. With all our faults, there can be no doubt that the cult of beauty has gained an enormous number of adherents during the last generation, and almost everyone likes to possess some characteristic piece of furniture or ornaments of the period of our great-grandparents—to go no farther back.

These sincere but somewhat vague patrons of the arts of bygone days are easy to please, for in the house of antiques are

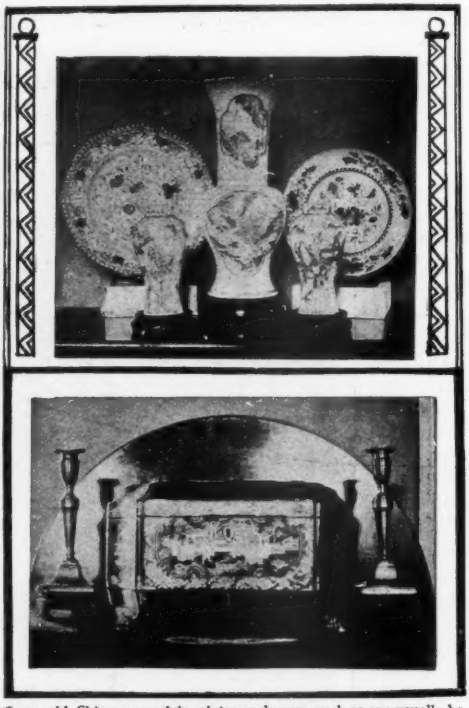
The small walnut dressing-table is characteristic of Queen Anne's time: the original brasswork is very decorative and simple. A curious old lacquer cabinet is seen above, the decoration being Chinese and the cabinet work of English oak. Behind that is a style of lacquer tray in red and black that is useful and beautiful. The mirror above is a Stuart piece framed in oyster wood, which does not show in so small a photograph. The polished leather box beneath the table is the kind of thing used in the eighteenth century for deeds, etc. They are made of heavy oak, and are well finished.

many mansions, and almost everything that was made for everyday use, before the coming of machinery, had a pleasant personal character and a certain beauty of its own.

Snuff-boxes.

The beautiful works of art that were produced for the courts of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to contain the powdered tobacco of the great ones of the earth have given a great vogue to the collection of snuff-boxes. But the most costly and splendid of the gold and jewelled and painted boxes are already in the museums and big private collections, and it is rather to the vast quantity of beautifully made simple examples that I would draw attention. Although these were wrought in shell and silver and wood, carved and painted, and in Sheffield plate and a dozen other materials quite late into the nineteenth century they did not suffer so much from the general decadence in taste as many analogous articles. Although the use of snuff itself may be said to have utterly departed from amongst us, the boxes remain suitable for a thousand small uses, and good examples in silver, and especially those in shell and silver shown in the first and seventh illustrations, are well worth collecting for oneself or as a store on which to draw when presents for others are required. Collectors have long inclined to the snuffbox as a quarry. No one was keener in that way than the Prince of Wales who afterwards became George IV. While his father was alive some quaint old verses mention his taste for such specimens and add :

Our Regent Prince
A wond'rous passion doth evince,
To guard in armoury, with care,
Types of old saddles *militaire ;*
While Charlotte, too, with rapture dwells
On medals, coins, and precious shells ! . . .
One, rusty armour buys amain,
Or painted window's shattered pane ;
The skins of birds, of beasts, of fishes,
Cups, saucers, teapots, old Delft dishes.



Some old Chinese porcelain plates and vases, such as can usually be found in the shops where they sell genuine antiques.
Tea-caddy of Canton lacquer, of which a large number were shipped to Europe about 100 years ago. These boxes are of black and two colours of gold generally, very good in design and colour, and well preserved.

And thus one is reminded that the vogue of giving and collecting antiques is by no means a new fashion but rather the revival of an eighteenth-century custom.

Pretender Glasses.

Some months ago a few of these glasses were mentioned ; that they are still to be found in forgotten glass closets is demonstrated by those specimens which were lately unearthed—with others—by Mr. Jerningham at the Norfolk seat of Sir Henry Bedingfeld,

where they had lain idle since the far-off days when :

> First great George was buried and gone,
> George the Second was plodding on, . . .
> The people of rank to correct their tone
> Went out of town to Marybone.

At that time those who were connected with Jacobite aspirations took pretty good care to keep the toasts, and Wortley Montagu wrote, "Old china is below nobody's taste, since it has had the Duke of Argyll's, whose understanding has never been doubted either by his friends or enemies," even unto our own period. Perhaps the Duke of Argyll or any other person of great understanding is not required to guide us in these matters, for now the taste

Small plain walnut chest on stand belonging to the end of the seventeenth century, say 1680–90. Above are pieces of Persian lacquer beautiful in workmanship, but not at present fashionable. Near by are some English snuff-boxes of 100 years ago.

the Fiat and other Pretender glasses which were used to drink them, well retired from the general eye.

Old China.

There is always a charm about the porcelains and earthenwares of early days that makes old pieces of ceramics particularly pleasing presents. Since the far-off time when Lady Mary for and knowledge of porcelains is so general among cultivated persons that the hobby is pursued without the semblance of shame that still clung to it in the eighteenth century. Then, even as now, such an old Nankin vase on stand as is given in the seventh illustration formed a charming gift for either Oriental or Occidental. But the many less important examples scattered

Gallery showing antique furniture, such as can be adapted with effect to almost any style of room.

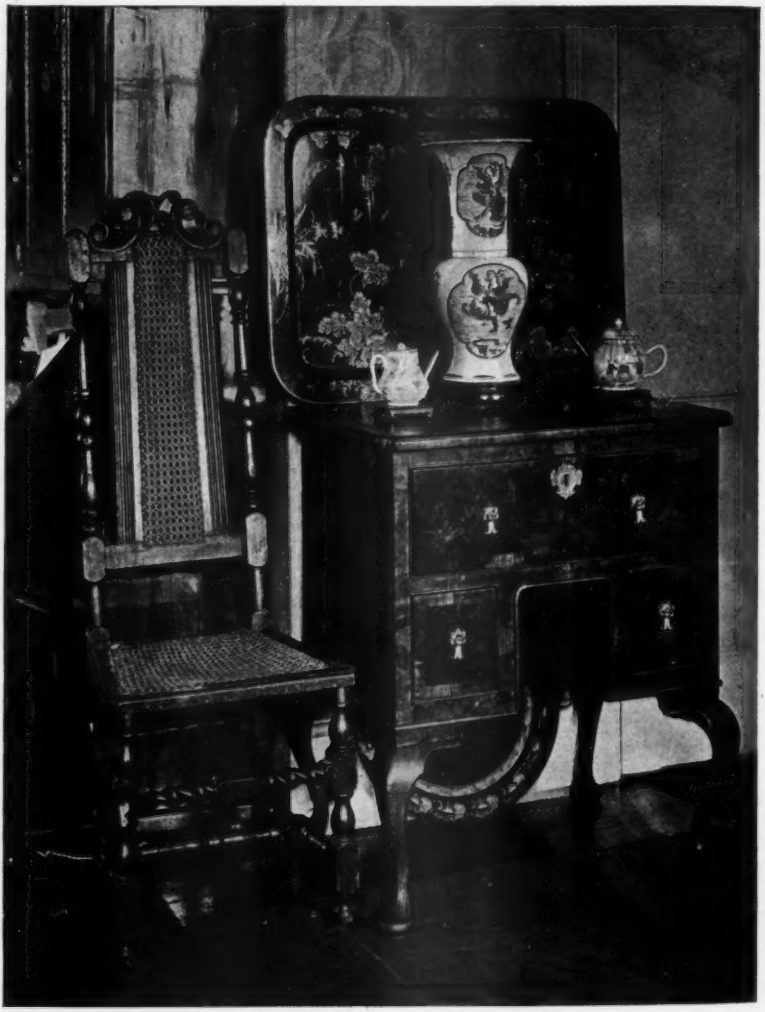
throughout the illustrations are objects not difficult to get, and quite satisfying in their quiet beauty and pleasing eighteenth-century feeling.

Old Furniture.

Although this sounds rather a formidable subject for the Christmas gift, there are so many small pieces—from the curious little walnut dressing-tables in general use in the time of Queen Anne, three of which are seen in illustrations Nos. 2, 4, and 10, to the trays and tiny early chests of drawers and cabinets as seen in the first and second photographs, that there is in reality no difficulty in finding easily practicable pieces suitable for the occasion. The larger examples in the illustration above, which shows a gallery arranged by Messrs. Shoolbred, chairs and chests and so forth, are always of use. It is quite simple for the recipient to combine such pieces with his or her other furniture. Indeed, it is rather a curious quality of old mahogany and walnut that it adapts itself to its surroundings with easy grace. With oak there is difficulty; this sort of furniture needs a more carefully selected background, and the elimination of more sophisticated examples of old cabinet work, and thus the early English furniture and village pieces, generally made in this wood, do not form very attractive gifts. The large numbers of various antique boxes

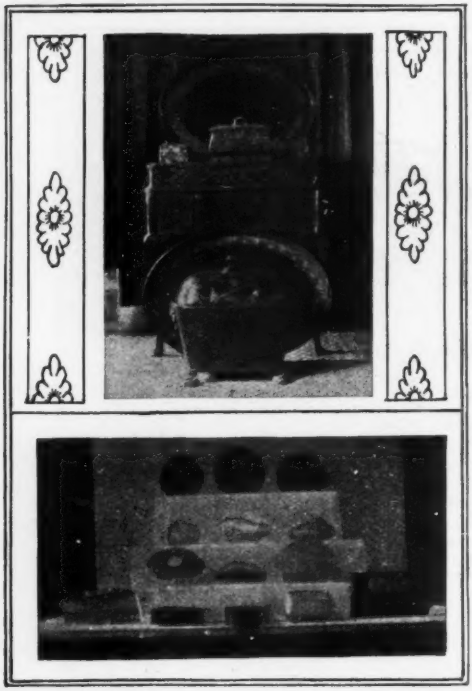
Some "Pretender" glasses, such as were used by the clubs which kept alive the Stuart tradition. The Prince of Wales's feathers on the stands were those of Charles Edward the Young Pretender.

which were in use during the eighteenth century, a few examples of which are shown in these pictures, are always useful and decorative. Those be cleaned and restored, so that specimens of it may be said to combine the qualities of the antique with the freshness and brilliancy of a modern



Stuart chair and oyster wood or Lignum vitæ dressing-table of William and Mary period. The porcelain is Chinese of the eighteenth century, and the trays above and below table papier maché of the early nineteenth century. All are pieces still to be found, and well within the limits of a modest purse.

of English and Oriental lacquer are especially attractive, for this is a material which keeps its original gloss and character for generations, and can production. As I have sometimes pointed out before, all the old Oriental lacquers form delightfully decorative presents. The carved and coloured



The upper picture shows a collection of Japanned tin ware, such as was produced in England in the earliest days of the last century. The trays, tea-caddies, and coal-boxes are often to be found in excellent preservation. The lower photograph shows a collection of small eighteenth-century snuff-boxes in shell, tortoiseshell, and ivory.

Chinese production, a small specimen of which is shown in the ninth photograph, is extraordinarily impervious to external influences, and will defy the hand of Time. Screens and panels can always be used in the decoration of even unpromising rooms with admirable effect. The pleasure of this work, the satisfying quality of the designs, and charming colouring outlast the centuries. Of course, "naught may endure but mutability," still, the antique art of Chinese lacquer is one of the few things that tests this truism to the verge of breaking.

Old "Japanned" Ware.

Among the various results created by the eighteenth-century admiration for Oriental lacquer, one of the most valuable in England was the japanning on metal. This craft, which was carried out in Birmingham, in Wales, and elsewhere with no small skill, has left our generation very many interesting examples. In this illustration here a few of these pieces may be seen. The ground is usually red or black, but the decorations are often in gold and lively colours. Although quite without the durability of Chinese and Japanese lacquers, the best work in this style has managed to survive unto our day in excellent preservation. At present the trays, tea- and sugar-boxes, candle-sticks and coal-scuttles, and many other useful pieces made in this early "Japan" are not greatly collected. Their prices are still modest, but their decorative qualities are very pleasant, and there is an agreeable suggestion of the early days of Jane Austen

Example of old Chinese carving on lacquer from a screen at South Kensington.

and the social atmosphere of one hundred years ago about these objects which makes them welcome to the lover of the applied arts of the past.

The many collectors who have been hard at work during the last ten years, and the legion of producers of pseudo-antiques, have no doubt made the gathering together of *Antiques as Christmas Presents* a little more difficult than in the old days. But I fancy this only adds to the pleasures of the chase for the old hunter, and makes one's little victories doubly sweet owing to the pitfalls and the gins with which the way of the admirer of the arts and crafts of the eighteenth century is now so much beset. The pace quickens, the dangers of the sport increase, but the game goes merrily on.

Another style of walnut dressing-table in absolutely original condition. The small brass knob handles were often used on these shallow drawers, but they are very different in appearance from the modern style. The lacquer box is a Japanese example of about forty years ago. It is not so good as the antique, but better than the work now sent to Europe.

CHRISTMAS IN THE SHOPS.

FASHIONS IN LONDON AND PARIS.

BY M. E. CLARKE.

SOME people say they do not like Christmas, but I think they will change their minds if they will read what I have to say about the Christmas things one now sees in the beautiful shops of Paris and London, which are all decked out for our benefit, and which should help us to believe that Christmas is really a time of good cheer and festivity.

* * *

Dress.

The early part of the winter is always given up to getting the right clothes so that one may be ready for the really cold weather when it comes, and we always hope it *will* come for Christmas. At any rate, we are ready for it this year, with our warm materials and charming styles. The materials most in vogue are ratine, velvet, and taffetas. The first is inclined to bag at the knees, the second shows every mark when we sit on a cane chair, and the third cuts. But in spite of these drawbacks everybody will have dresses made in all three. To prevent a ratine skirt from bagging, a good, firm, silk petticoat should be worn beneath it, and the skirt itself should be slightly lifted when the wearer sits down, as, indeed, should all tailor-made skirts. To avoid having an easily marked velvet skirt, choose rather a ribbed velvet; it certainly marks less and is more up-to-date than plain velvet. To cure taffetas of cutting is impossible, but it is well to remember that a very supple taffeta is less likely to cut than a stiff one. The first favourite colour of the season was violet, and it is lasting still, although in Paris it is already on the decline, and in London, in those very inner circles where a new fashion lasts a day and a night and very little longer, it is also on the wane. But it is used faithfully for one very lovely object in dress, and that is to make those dear little Russian blouses which are slipped on in the house for afternoon tea or bridge, above a simple white, or mauve, or pale green, or pale rose crêpe de Chine or voile dress which has remained with us from last summer. Voile, satin, velvet, no matter what soft stuff, answers the purpose, and the violet colour note is always charming. This little garment gives a teagown turn to a simple afternoon dress, and is extremely useful in helping an old gown to live a little longer with a youthful smile upon its face. For street wear sober tones are very much affected in Paris, a little less so in London, although the very best-dressed women in London, as in Paris, prefer dark dresses for out of doors to bright ones, and a good many of the smartest women in Europe are still noted for always wearing black and white. In hats, this combination is particularly popular, and, try as they do to persuade their *clientes* to wear colours, the milliners have had to make all the most distinguished visiting hats in black velvet trimmed with white, black, or grey feathers, aigrettes, or marabout. The difference between last year's big black velvet hats and this year's is the way in which they are trimmed. Last year all the aigrettes sat up, this year they lie down and stand off from the brim at a rakish

GREY TAILOR-MADE, TRIMMED WITH FUR, AT BERNARD'S.

Photo] [Félix.

angle on the left side behind. The crowns are flat, and the brims have most becoming lines. Other hats show high crowns and scarcely any brims, with trimmings of fur or velvet wings, edged with marabout or embroidered in silks and beads. Oriental ornaments are used to fasten feathers or wings to the base of the crown, and the great point in all millinery is to keep the lines good, just as it is in dress. This means that trimmings must be used sparingly. Sometimes they resolve themselves into a band of fur, one feather, one flat aigrette, or a band of gold lace and a fantasy in marabout. A little hat which is having a certain vogue is the white feather hat shaped rather like a boat with two fly-away white wings on either side. The same thing in fur looks charming for the skating rink. But no matter how sparsely a hat may be trimmed, its price is high, because the shape of a really smart hat is a bit of work for a master hand alone; also, the lightness which marks a good hat can never be attained by an unskilled milliner. The pose of the hat necessitates a barette this season, although not a high one—merely a little roll of velvet to lift the hat just a fraction all round the head so that the hair may be seen from no matter what point of view.

* * *

Furs.

In London, furs are more reasonable in price than in Paris, but in both cities they are very much worn by all classes. The new fashion of having bands of fur mounted on stoles of velvet, satin, voile, and fine white cloth is one which appeals to the economical, resourceful woman very much. Anyone who has fur put by can now use it in a hundred different ways, but one of the most charming and effective is to take a width of bright-coloured chiffon of two-fold thickness and about two to two and a half yards long, and on it sew long-way bands of ermine, chinchilla, skunk, or any of the many furs we now use so lavishly in spite of their increasing rarity. A violet chiffon scarf with bands of chinchilla, a bright red one with ermine, a blue one with skunk, would any one of them make the most enchanting evening wrap it is possible to imagine. Some women have muffs to match, and the new way of wearing the stoles twisted round the body under the arms, and, finally, one end thrown over the left shoulder, is amusing, if a little inconsistent. Some of the all-fur stoles are quite a metre wide, and they are so arranged with fastenings as to form mantles should the wearer wish. Ermine without tails is as much worn as ermine with them, and there is a new fashion of using fox skins which is worth notice. The skin is so fastened over the back part of the shoulders on a big coat as to form a sort of cape, the head and the tails falling on either side at the back of the arms. The arrangement looks very smart, but it must be confessed that it leaves the chest uncovered. A more practical way of trimming a coat is the shawl collar in fur, and, happily, nothing is more in fashion on the coat and skirt for daily wear. A coarse-ribbed grey ratine, with a blue and grey chiffon blouse and a coat cut rather long and straight, with a wide shawl collar of skunk or silver musk rat, is the most charming idea; or a deep red-brown velvet, with a collar of blue fox or opossum, looks well, or, better still, black fox and jet buttons on the same deep red. The small cravat of fur thrown over one shoulder and wrapped tightly round the throat is not the latest style, but a good many girls cling to it as comfortable and attractive. The big fur coat, that luxury of the rich woman, is, of course, always in fashion, but I still continue to advise no one to buy cheap fur coats. They must be bad speculations, and they are not good style. Far better is it to have a velvet or ratine coat trimmed with fur, rounded at the bottom, and well crossed over in front so as to leave no unnecessary fullness round the legs, and with a huge cape or pointed collar round the shoulders. It can be well and warmly lined with a bright, good colour, as bright linings are a note of the year.

INCREASED COST OF LIVING.

HOW TO MEET IT.

A LARGER INCOME.

Many people with fixed incomes have been sorely perplexed and inconvenienced by the greatly increased cost of living within the last few years. It has occurred to comparatively few that their income, if obtained from investments, might also be proportionately increased with absolute safety.

For example, £1,000 invested in the ordinary way in gilt-edged securities will yield perhaps £30 to £40 per annum. Invested in an annuity, a male aged 45 would draw annually £67 4s.; at age 60, £97; and at 80, £213 5s. If the health be impaired the annuity would be even larger.

If you have not considered the matter, you naturally ask how it is possible to give such large returns. It is the result of co-operation. If you knew when your life would end, you could spend part of your capital and all of your interest each year, so that at your death your capital would be exhausted. For lack of such foreknowledge, you cannot safely adopt this method. You can, however, obtain the equivalent result by co-operating with others through the medium of a well-established life assurance company, thus getting the benefit of average duration of life, with the assurance that should you live to extreme old age your income never fails.

In choosing a company in which to take a life policy, there are many things to be taken into account, such as the premium rate, rate of bonus, etc., but in purchasing an annuity you have only to find the company giving the best rate and then to make sure that it is financially strong.

The Sun Life of Canada, with £8,000,000 of well-invested funds earning £5 10s. per cent. per annum, gives a higher rate to annuitants than any other company doing business in Great Britain. It was established over forty years ago, and confines itself strictly to life and annuity business. It has for many years transacted a successful business in the United Kingdom, where it has steadily grown in favour as its merits have become better known.

For the special protection of policy-holders and annuitants in Great Britain and Ireland, the Sun Life of Canada has made a voluntary permanent trust deposit of £100,000 in securities in the Bank of Scotland, in the names of the Right Hon. the Earl of Albemarle and the Right Hon. Sir Charles Dalrymple, Bart., P.C., as trustees.

The following shows the amount required to purchase an annuity of £100 per annum, payable half-yearly, in the Sun Life of Canada, in comparison with other British offices:

Males.	Age 65.	Age 75.
Sun of Canada	£895	£613
Average of other British Offices	950	636
Females.		
Sun of Canada	£992	£669
Average of other British Offices	1,071	701

Larger annuities will be granted to persons with impaired health. Where the impairment is of a serious nature, the annuity will be correspondingly increased.

Many persons are deterred from purchasing annuities because of the loss of capital that would result from early death. To obviate this objection, the Sun of Canada issues annuity bonds guaranteeing that should death occur before the annuity payments equal the amount invested, the difference will be returned to the annuitant's legal representatives on proof of death.

Deferred annuities to begin at some fixed date in the future may be purchased at greatly reduced rates, and may be paid for in a single payment or by annual or half-yearly instalments, either with or without return of premiums in case of death before the first payment of the annuity becomes due. This form of annuity is especially suitable for professional men and others who are desirous, during the productive period of their lives, of providing a retiring income. Provision may also be made for the continuance of the income (or a portion of it) to the wife or other dependent.

Inquiries addressed to the Sun Life of Canada, 22 Canada House, Norfolk Street, Strand, London, W.C., will receive prompt and courteous attention.

VELVET DRESS AND BOLERO AT BERNARD'S.

Photo] [Félix.

Evening Dress.

The advent of the train is the most radical change in this season's gowns for evening wear, and the various shapes that trains can take prove interesting. I have seen them dwindling away into one fine point, I have seen them slit into two points, and the last model shows a three-pointed train. The average length of a train is about a yard to a yard and a half, and it generally falls from a drapery on the dress, not from the actual dress, as, for instance, a rich brocade gown will have a swathing drapery round the waist, which forms soft folds about the skirt and trails away into a train behind, or a pearly satin gown will have a gold and silver lace tunic, and this will form the train, not the satin undergown, although the train should be lined. Many black and white dresses are in white satin with black lace flounces and velvet tunics, and the tunics form the trains. Many of the *décolletés* are pointed back and front, and are extremely low, but very narrow. Square *décolletés* are much lower behind than in front, and only on young girl dresses does one see round *décolletés*. The lace fichu still holds its own, but tends to elongate itself into a scarf, which wanders gently down the skirt and ends in a point somewhere near the feet. All shoulder draperies are very light and graceful, and anyone who has fur to use up may wear it round the feet and on the corsage of an evening dress this season. The multiplicity of tunics is bewildering; on many dresses they are threefold, each one of different shape and length and material, but they must all be light and pliable, and so arranged as not to spoil the line of the gown altogether. For evening wear, women of a certain age still cling to black and white or violet and black, but girls and young married women are wearing soft colours of all kinds—parma violet over white, mauve over pink, fuchsia shades, mingled blues with touches of gold and silver here and there. Pansy shades in brocaded gauze, with gold lace in the form of a long shoulder drapery, are charming, so are many of the brilliant green and gold dresses in silken materials which some women are wearing. And quite a note on some dinner gowns is the fashion of having long, tight sleeves reaching well over the knuckles. This idea is enchanting, and one which has found much favour with artistically minded women. Sarah Bernhardt used to wear them long ago, possibly she does now, and several beautiful women who are wives of well-known painters affect them a good deal. Dance dresses are being made short enough *and* wide enough for graceful dancing, and for this we may be thankful, although trains will also be worn at dances, I expect, as so many women prefer long evening gowns, and with reason, for they are much more graceful than short ones.

* * *

Jewellery.

The love of earrings is still with us, but some women in the inner circles have given them up since they have become so general, and in Paris they still cause people to stare. A very important jeweller in London told me that all the new necklets and pendants this season are being made after exquisitely fine and delicate designs, the heavy, magnificent kind now being quite *démodé*. The passion for heavy barbaric ornaments is happily dead, and women now search for old settings and rare stones, which they are careful not to mix wildly on their persons. A pretty idea for a Christmas gift in jewellery is to find out what are one's friends' lucky stones, and give them some ornament with their particular stone in it. A February birthday means a sapphire, I know, a November birthday a bloodstone; but there my knowledge ends. It is, however, quite easy to find a book on these things, and everyone has enough of superstition in their composition to like the idea of having a lucky stone to wear. Bracelets can only be worn with short sleeves, therefore, with so many long sleeves to the fore, their revival has had a reverse; but when short sleeves are worn, as, of course, they still are by women with

NOTES ON OUR ADVERTISERS.

A USEFUL COOKER.—Those who have tried the Welbank Boilerette are certainly enthusiastic in its praise. It possesses several interesting qualities that make it almost indispensable in the kitchen. A complete dinner, for instance, can be placed in the Boilerette and then left to cook without attention, for it cannot boil over or burn, and the food will be found both daintily and perfectly cooked when the time comes to serve dinner. Another strong point in its favour is that tough meat can be cooked in it in such a way as to render it delicious and digestible. Old fowls can be made quite tender and tasty stews are easily made. The Boilerette can be obtained in various sizes and prices to suit all households, and readers who are not acquainted with it will do well to write to Messrs. P. L. Welbank, Duplex Works, Banbury, for their very interesting booklet.

AN EXCELLENT COFFEE MAKER.—A useful and novel Christmas Gift is the "Tricolator" Coffee Maker, which is so much more simple than most appliances and makes perfect coffee. There are no breakable parts, and no difficulty in cleaning. Many people prefer coffee for breakfast, but few know how to make it, and coffee has hitherto been looked upon as a Sunday morning or after-dinner luxury. The difficulties are overcome by using the "Tricolator," for the water is simply poured on the coffee and a bright clear beverage free from sediment tricolates through. It is made of spun aluminium and is sold at three shillings and threepence, post free.

HEALTH BY POST.—The announcement in our pages of Mr. T. Inch will doubtless appeal to many readers who desire to increase their muscular powers, and by so doing improve their general health. The system is one that can be carried out entirely in the home and entails no visits to the training school or gymnasium. The cost is comparatively small, in view of the fact that it covers all the lessons, charts and apparatus, and that each pupil receives individual attention and special exercises. An illustrated booklet, giving full particulars and fees, has been prepared by Mr. T. Inch, and he will be glad to send it post free on receipt of a post card addressed to him at Munster House, 676 Fulham Road, S.W., mentioning the PALL MALL MAGAZINE.

ZENOBIA PERFUMES.—The approach of the Christmas festivities is always the sign of increased activity in the perfumers' shops, for there are few presents more acceptable to most ladies than a case of delicate perfumes. With so many makes on the market, however—good, bad and indifferent—the purchaser should exercise some discretion in making his choice, but he cannot go far wrong in selecting the Zenobia brand manufactured by Mr. W. F. Charles, of Loughborough, Leicestershire. There are some dozens of perfumes in his list, all natural scent of the flowers, and to mention only three, Zenobia Sweet Pea Blossom, Lily of the Valley and Night Scented Stock, will give the purchaser a sufficient indication of the delicate odours to be obtained. To readers who care to write enclosing three penny stamps and mentioning the PALL MALL MAGAZINE, Mr. W. F. Charles will send a bijou box containing samples of Zenobia perfume, soap and sachet. In buying, care should be taken to insist upon the Zenobia trade mark.

HOMESPUN, TRIMMED WITH BLACK PASSEMENTERIE, AT REDFERN'S.

Photo] [Félix.

pretty arms, bracelets appear in quantities, and some women are wearing them clasped round the upper arm, as others are wearing anklets with their Oriental gowns. The big Paris dressmaker who is more or less responsible for the passion smart women have shown lately for all things Oriental in dress is patronised in Paris only for house gowns—at least, by the world that calls itself "Society"; and very lovely these house gowns are, chiefly because the materials are of such Eastern richness that, as colour schemes alone, they are a joy to look at. Jewellery of the right sort must necessarily go with them, and even anklets do not look out of place; moreover, they make a gentle music in the boudoir, keeping tune with the tinkling bell on the pet dog's collar! Such fantasies are somewhat frivolous perhaps, but they are harmless enough, and the craze for them soon dies out if it has no opposition, or if serious occupations intervene.

* * *

A Thousand Little Nothings.

I do not know if one may call a blouse a "nothing," but let it pass as such in this article. For several seasons we have had the kimono, and have loved it, but this season it has undergone several changes, and if one "takes notice" all the big West-End shops are making their latest models with set-in sleeves. Sometimes they are set in on the shoulders and finished off with a *dépassant*, but very often they are carried down the upper arm, and there, about three inches from the shoulder, the long sleeve is joined on. Another noticeable point about new blouses is the general fashion of trimming them in front with revers, either one large one or two small ones, which are adjusted at the edge of the *guimpe*, the latter having a high collar outlined round the throat with a *biais* of satin, but rarely with a ruche, although several dressmakers are trying to bring in ruches and ruffles once more. A narrow ribbon cravat is often worn round the base of the collar band and allowed to drop down the corsage, a fashion which is very pretty and neat.

Belts are also among my thousand nothings; and they vary from narrow shiny leather ones to the most elaborately fringed sashes. Have any amount of belts and sashes is my advice, for they are worn on everything. They may be of any material and any colour, with *choux* or bows or buckles to end them. Jewelled girdles are fashionable too, so are beaded bands of Egyptian designs; in fact, every kind of belt one can think of can be used this season with safety, but it must be placed a little lower down on the figure than last season, with an inclination to drop in front.

* * *

Christmas Presents.

Surely out of all the many things which the West End is showing it will be easy to buy Christmas presents, at any rate for a woman or a child, as their wants are infinite and their tastes fickle where clothes and toys are concerned. As for a man, one only has to pander to his hobby. Something which has to do with that, either directly or indirectly, and he will be quite pleased. And if a man is in doubt as to a woman's wants, let him study the West End for a while, and he will find that his choice ranges over furs, jewels, laces, belts, gloves, even flowers, for artificial flowers are very expensive and very fashionable too; in fact, I see no excuse for wriggling out of giving all his women belongings beautiful Christmas gifts, carefully chosen to suit their special needs.

M. E. CLARKE.

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Health
Before All

I have an important message for every reader of the PALL MALL MAGAZINE—particularly for every business man and each sedentary worker.

It is remarkable how many business men—astute in every other respect—make the very serious mistake of neglecting their health. Let me assure you that the unnatural mode of living, compulsory under present-day conditions in the case of 99 per cent. of business men, **is absolutely certain in the course of time to undermine your health and leave you with some serious ailment.**

Health is within your reach. I can put you in possession of the most priceless gift Nature can bestow—a physical condition which will enable you to enjoy and get the most out of life. A healthy man is a thousand times more to be envied than a rich man. Money is only of value for that which it will purchase.

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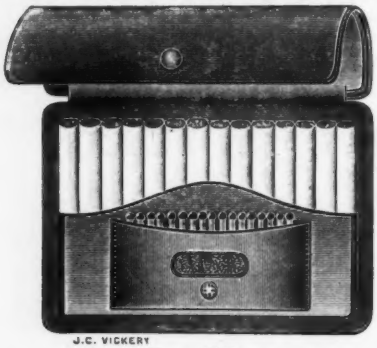

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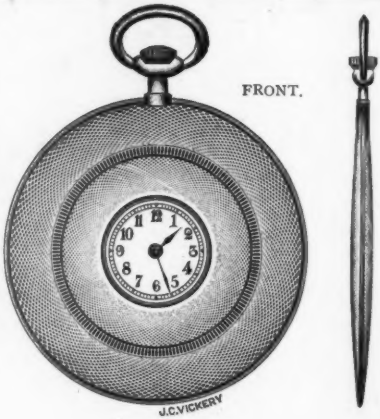

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